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The Patricians.

Vol. I. P. 183

Published May 10. 1826 by Geo. B. Whittaker, London.

[Soane, George (transl.)]

SPECIMENS

OF

GERMAN ROMANCE.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM

VARIOUS AUTHORS.

by [George Soane]

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PRINTED FOR GEO. B. WHITTAKER,
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LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

When the translator commenced this work, it was with the intention of carrying it on through many volumes, and thus presenting a complete circle of German romance. In such a work, it must be obvious that much must be hazarded, for the very nature of it allows of no compromise with English tastes and feelings, and demands that the several tales should be selected with reference to their popularity amongst Germans. Circumstances, not necessary to be detailed, have interrupted this project, and it is mentioned only to account for the appearance of a tale from Hoffman, which would not have found a place in this collection, had the translator deemed that the present volumes would be the limit of his labours.

London,
March 20, 1826.

THE PATRICIANS.

It was in the year 1568, on the 17th of May, old style, that Althea, the widow of Netz of Bogendorf, sate in her apartments at Schweidnitz. The mourning veil still flowed about her pale beautiful face, while her blue eyes gazed through their tears with melancholy tenderness on the only pledge of a brief yet happy union, the four years' old Henry, who sate upon her knees, and in childish sport was trying to pull the golden locks of his mother from under her widows' cap. Before her stood her old uncle, Seifried von Schindel, and, while he held the full goblet in his hand, exhausted himself in consolations to lessen the anguish of his beloved niece. With good-humoured rebuke he exclaimed, "It is, no

doubt, praise-worthy in your zeal to grieve for the loss of your husband; I myself can't bear those widows, who, like green wood, weep at one end, and burn at the other; but even good may be carried to excess, and this utter surrender of yourself to grief is as contrary to reason as it is to the word of God."

"How can I help it?" said Althea, with calm and patient sorrow: "How can I help it, when all that surrounds me is an inexhaustible source of tears? Do I see my husband's sword hanging against the wall, I must weep—do I hear his war-horse neighing in the stable, I must weep —does my sight fall upon this fatherless child—alas!"—tears stifled her words.

"A child who will soon be motherless too," exclaimed her uncle, "if you go on thus destroying your health by such unchristian want of fortitude. Every thing has its season; your year of widowhood is past, and as you are no longer entitled to wear black, so your mind too must cast off the mourning in which it has been too closely enveloped, and you must begin again to live for the world, to which, after all, you be-

long. If you were a papist, you might bury your grief in a cloister, for ought I should care; but that won't do now; and, besides, you have important and sacred duties upon you. The property that you have to preserve for the son of a beloved husband requires a stout protector in these stormy times. A woman's bringing up, too, will not be sufficient for him, and you 'll not like to let him go from you so soon; therefore you must give him a father who, with all love and earnestness, will make an honourable knight out of him. In a word, you must marry again."

"Spare me such language, uncle," cried Althea, rising and putting down the child.

But with gentle violence he forced her back into the chair again, saying, "It becomes youth to listen to the well-meant admonitions of age, even though it should not happen to relish them: I keep to my position. You least of all have occasion to complain of the want of wooers. There is Hans Hund of Ingersdorf, Adam von Schweinicher of Wenigmoknau; then there is your own cousin: all of whom would with pleasure break their necks for a kind look from you, and

are besides brave knights and in good circumstances."

"How can you, even in jest, propose to sacrifice me to these rude companions, who have no enjoyment except in hunting, gambling, drinking, and quarrelling; and who would only make me miss so much the more painfully the mild pious disposition of my Henry?"

"Why to be sure our knights are somewhat tough and knotty, but so are our oaks, and they afford a glorious wood for lasting. Mill-wheels are not to be cut out of poplars. For the rest, a shrewd handsome woman must know how to tame a rake, and every one will respect the female slipper when it is wielded merely for a man's benefit."

"God deliver me from such a castigatory office; I should soon sink under it."

—"Or if you long for a great fortune, you have but to give the sign: I have observed how Christopher Friend, whom you have drawn hither, circles about you at a distance. He is a brisk widower, who was rich from the first, and to that has inherited much from his late wife,

the Lauterbachin from Jauer. You would be able to bury yourself under your gold bags."

"Shame on me if that could ever determine my choice!"

"Nor has honour any thing to say against it. Christopher's father is burgomaster of Schweidnitz, where he rules it bravely, almost like a little king. The Friends belong to the Patricians of the city, and are therefore nearly as good as half nobles; in Augsburg or Nuremberg they would be reckoned nobles, and admissible to the tournay; moreover they are already allied to the family of Schindel by marriage."

"If you love me, uncle, cease to speak for the sycophant. If, to save my son's life, I were compelled to choose between this Christopher and his brother the wild Francis, by heavens I would choose the latter! I do indeed fear the bear that roars and rushes on me with uplifted paws, but the gliding serpent is a horror to my inmost soul."

"Well, the comparison is not particularly flattering to either of the brothers," exclaimed

Schindel, laughing. But on the sudden he was silent, for there was a knocking at the door, and the two Friends entered the apartment.

"We come in our father's service, noble lady," said Christopher, with a courteous inclination: "He gives a ball and banquet the day after to-morrow, and most kindly requests you to grace the festival with your presence."

"I have not yet put off the mourning weeds for my husband; at the same time I set as much value by the intended honour as if it had been in my power to accept it."

"Your year of widowhood is already over, and my father would deem it a very worthy proof of his kinswoman's friendship, if out of regard to him she were to lay aside her mourning. Much as it may become you, it is still only a useless remembrance of a loss, the greatness of which you feel but too deeply without that."

"My brother is in the right," roared Francis: "Throw the black rags into the store-chest, and trim yourself up again in the colours that suit you so well. You must not think of leaving life yet; 'twould be pity of such a handsome

thing. Nor would we Schweidnitzers allow it, and you are within our walls now, and under our jurisdiction. Come along, then, to the dance. We'll waltz it bravely with each other; and if your cap should happen to get awry in it, and point to the widower, there may be a remedy for that too. My house-plague, besides, is always ill; and if she loves heaven better than I do, there may chance to be a pair of you and me."

"Your mouth is a sluice," exclaimed the old Schindel, wrathfully, "which, once opened, overwhelms every thing with its mire."

"Good God, Frank! how can you indulge in such unseemly language?" cried Christopher; while Althea bent down to her child as if she had heard nothing; Francis turned upon his brother.

"Don't you play the governor, Kit! In your heart you mean just as I do, only you go winding about the porridge: but that's not my way, and therefore I say plainly, Cousin Althea, I am horribly thirsty with you."

"There stand the flask and goblet," replied

Althea, shortly—" help yourself;" and she turned away with her boy to the window.

" You don't stand on much ceremony with your kinsfolk," muttered Francis, going to the table and filling up a bumper, while Christopher went up to the widow.

" I hope you will not make me suffer for my brother's rashness, but will give me a favourable answer."

" I have already told you the reason why I must decline the invitation."

" And you really, then, will put off my father with this poor excuse?"

" Agree to go," whispered the uncle: " It is a family festival, and all the Schindels of the neighbourhood are invited. It is better not to be singular and offend any one."

" I will come," said Althea, after a moment's hesitation.

" I have to thank you, Schindel, for this *yes*," returned Christopher, mortified: " The former *no* was intended for me alone; which cannot but grieve me, however handsome the lips that pronounced it."

He went; and Francis, filling the goblet for the third time, cried out after him, " The wine is good; I shall stop a little longer."

There was now a clattering on the stairs, as if a whole troop were coming up, and in rushed Althea's brother-in-law, Anselm of Netz, with his Pylades, Frederick of Reichenbach, surnamed Bieler.

" God be with you, fair sister-in-law," exclaimed the wild Netz, shaking Althea's white hand with no very gentle cordiality.

" What brings you so soon again to the city?" returned Althea displeasedly, and drew back her hand.

" Rasselwitz treats us to-day with a dozen flasks of old Hungary, at Barthel Wallach's," replied Netz: " You know that when once I get into the old den I can't set off again without having seen you. God forgive you, lady, but you must have bewitched me; and I shall yet denounce you to the council of Schweidnitz."

" How willingly would I undo the spell of which you complain! Truly, it gives me no pleasure."

"Tush! you are not in earnest. We all know that women like to be courted, that their value may be the greater."

Here he began to whistle and clatter up and down the room, when his eyes suddenly fell upon Francis, who had not yet been able to separate himself from the goblet.

"The devil! you too, Friend! What wind has blown you hither?"

"If any one should ask you," said Francis roughly, "tell him you don't know."

"And how is it with your lucky horse-swop?" asked Netz, in a mocking tone: "Have you settled with Rasselwitz?"

"Long ago," replied Francis, dryly, and poured out the drainings of the flask.

"It must be allowed," exclaimed Netz, with a loud laugh—"you know how to manage things admirably. He has got the bay, then?"

"If I were an ass! I was drunk at the time I made the bargain, and therefore am bound to nothing."

"Rasselwitz will show you that, my fine fel-

low! You have had his horse, and must keep your word."

"He may fetch his mare, then, from the hangman. The beast fell down with me at the Bresslauer gate. I should deserve to be breeched if I suffered myself to be cheated in this manner."

"You'll have a stout tussle of it with him. In such matters he does not jest, and least of all with you."

"Let him come, then, and fight it out with me. I have already shown the Turks in Hungary that I am not afraid. When I have got my cold iron at my side, I am a match for a whole stable-full of such younkers."

And with this he emptied the last goblet and drained it, while Netz bit his lips, and drawing Bieler aside, asked in a whisper, "If they should not throw the braggart out of window?" To this the other replied by a friendly nod of assent; but Althea, who had overheard the question, exclaimed, "For God's sake do not trouble the quiet of this widowed house!"

"And think, besides," said the old Schindel, warningly, "that you are at Schweidnitz, in his father's jurisdiction." At the same time he went up to Francis, and observed, "I have yet a visit to make to the old doctor Heidenreich, who has removed, and I do not know his present quarters. Will you have the kindness, cousin Friend, to show me the way thither?"

"Why not?" said Francis, seizing his cap; "though I well know whence the request comes. You want me away, that I may not get into a row with these nobles here. Isn't it so? Ay, ay, Frank may be a wild companion, but he is no fool. Well, you are a good old gentleman, and for this time I'll comply with your wishes. Good morning, lady Althea."

He went with the old Schindel to the door, and then turned back again—"What I have said of Rasselwitz you may boldly repeat to him; I stand to my words."

The two went away together. Netz looked indignantly after Francis, and exclaimed, "That such a fellow should give himself so many airs,

merely because he is rich and his father is a burgomaster!"

"You should not have irritated him," replied Althea, with mild rebuke: "Why do you meddle with him, if he does not please you?"

"You do not understand it, cousin. 'Tis in the blood of me, I cannot let him rest in quiet. Nothing is more delightful than jeering a cit, who would fain play the noble, and has not the stuff for it in him."

"Then you ought not to complain if he pays you in your own coin. I cannot comprehend, either, what satisfaction you men can find in fleering and flouting at any one who, in your opinion, is beneath you. If the person so mocked is patient enough to bear it, your victory is easy and inglorious; if he parries the attack with similar weapons, then there arise unnecessary quarrels: and in any case it shows an unchristian want of charity, to hunt out the foibles of a neighbour only to ridicule them for your amusement."

"The most lovely preacher that I ever heard," said Bieler, gallantly.

"You defend the rascal most nobly," muttered Netz. "If he were single I should suspect something; but as it is, I believe you do it merely that you may always contradict me."

"To what subterfuges will the consciousness of injustice turn itself rather than confess to truth she is in the right!"

She was interrupted by a gentle knocking at the door, and went hastily herself to open it, when there entered a tall stately man, about thirty years of age, in a plain knightly costume, and decorated with the sable scarf of Austria. Black locks hung about his clear forehead, while power and gentleness spoke out from his large dark eyes, that sparkled with friendly glances at the handsome widow.

"Am I so fortunate as to greet in you the wife of Henry von Netz?" he asked, with a dignified inclination to all present, which forced a similar courtesy from the two wild nobles.

"I was so," replied Althea; and a tear forced itself from her eye.

"Was!" said the stranger,—"and this habit! You are a widow, then? Heavens! So early

has my good Henry gone! and, as the appearance teaches me, from the bosom of a most happy marriage. That does, indeed, grieve me!"

"You knew my husband?" asked Althea, drying her eyes.

"Knew him?" rejoined the stranger, in the enthusiasm of recollection—"We made our first essay in arms together. Has he never talked to you of Caspar the Sparrenberger, surnamed Tausdorf?"

"Often, and with warm friendship. But he deemed you dead."

"I joined the campaign against the Turks, and lay dangerously wounded in Transylvania. ——That is your son?" he asked, in sudden emotion; and lifting up the little Henry, he kissed him heartily—"His true eye betrays the father—."

He set the boy down again, and paced hastily up and down the room to collect himself.

"We are both too much agitated," he resumed, "to carry on this conversation any longer. Permit me now to deliver a letter to you, which your friend Sternberg, of Gitschin,

requested me to take with me, when she understood that I was going to Schweidnitz."

"You know my Thekla, then?"

"We are near neighbours and good friends. My father lives at Tirschkokrig, not far from Gitschin, and I was frequently with the Sternberg family. The lady Thekla has talked so much of you, and so much in your praise, that I knew, before I saw, you."

"I doubt whether she has shown me truly, for friendship is a partial painter."

"Forgive me if I contradict you. Such, as you now stand before me, has your beautiful and friendly form long floated before my imagination."

Althea cast down her eyes in confusion; but the little Henry relieved her from the answer to this embarrassing discourse. He had grown as weary of the conversation as the two gaping nobles, and now began to twitch his mother's gown, and teaze for his evening meal; upon which she said, "Excuse me if I retire for a moment; I will but satisfy the little tormentor here, and read through my Thekla's letter,

while, in the meantime, my brother-in-law, Netz, will be happy to grow more intimately acquainted with you. Hereafter I will at leisure welcome you to Schweidnitz, and you shall tell me all about our friends at Gitschin."

She left the room with her son. Tausdorf looked after for awhile, and then seemed lost in thought. After a short pause, Netz renewed the conversation by saying, " You are a native of Bohemia, then?"

Tausdorf courteously replied, " My father settled some years ago in the hereditary domains of Austria as an imperial feodatory. I have the honour to be a native of Silesia."

" Does any business call you back to your native land?" asked Netz, with increasing cordiality : " If I can serve you in any thing, you have only to say so; I know from my brother's own mouth that you were his very good friend."

" I thank you for your kind proffers. For the present I have only to commend myself to your neighbourly good-will, for I think of settling shortly in the vicinity of Schweidnitz."

" You will be heartily welcome to us, though

you will find but sorry comfort now in this country."

Tausdorf was astonished.—" How so?"

" Oh, the burghers have got the upper hand of us nobles. Their wealth, their absurd privileges, have made them arrogant. A pitiful burgomaster of Schweidnitz will think himself greater than the emperor; and as to us, the whole mob of them look upon us with contempt. They need us not, they fear us not, and where they can do us any annoyance, they do it with delight."

" The purse-pride of the citizens is, no doubt, particularly disgusting; but to be candid, we should not too severely judge the industrious mechanic, the clever merchant, the dexterous artist, or the man of learning, even though the consciousness and the satisfaction of their hardly-earned property should lead them too far. Our pride of birth, when carried to excess, is also a hateful vice; and we have much less to advance in its defence, because that on which we pride ourselves is only *inherited*, and not *earned*. For the rest, I have always thought

that in these eternal feuds between the nobles and the citizens, the wrong was to be found on both sides; the right is always in the middle, and both parties can attain it only by mutual forbearance."

"There you judge wrongly of these Silesian pedlers," exclaimed the wild Bieler: "If a noble were only to yield a finger to them, they would seize the whole man, and clap him into a pepper-bag. No, no, you must keep a tight hand over the people, and hardly let them breathe, or there will one day be an end of our old customs and sacred privileges."

"So thought the nobles before the unlucky war of the peasants," said Tausdorf, "and Germany was turned into a desert by it."

"Don't take it ill, Tausdorf," returned Netz; "in other respects you may be a brave knight; but if we were to follow your maxims, we should all be forced to fly the cities."

Tausdorf shrugged up his shoulders at their incorrigible stubbornness, when Rasselwitz burst into the room, his face glowing with rage,

and asked furiously, " Is not Francis Friend here?"

" He was here a quarter of an hour ago," replied Netz; " perhaps you may yet find him at doctor Heidenreich's."

" I am in no humour to hunt after the rascal any longer," roared Rasselwitz. " This is the day whereon he promised to give up the horse to me. I have already beat up his quarters, but found him abroad, and the stable locked."

" He does not intend to give up the horse to you. He has openly and loudly declared as much here."

" We 'll soon see that," cried Rasselwitz furiously. " I 'll ask his wife for the stable-key, and if she refuses it, I 'll break the door open, and fetch out the animal by force. Will you join me?"

" Of course," replied Netz and Bieler.

" And you, Herr von Tausdorf?" said Netz. " A brave companion like you, will you not run the hazard with us?"

" I do not like such disputes," replied Taus-

dorf, gravely: "they too often degenerate into frays, wherein more honour is to be lost than gained. Besides, it seems to me that the right is not on your side. If you really have any well-grounded pretensions to the horse, an appeal to the courts would be a better way of proceeding than this forcible violation of another's property, which sets you in the class of feud-makers and agitators."

"To the courts?" shouted Rasselwitz, with a wild laugh—"And the burgomaster is the father of the perjured rascal that I am to complain of! He would do me admirable justice, no doubt! No! no! we shall get on much better with our hands. Come, comrades; there 's still enough of us for these pedlers."

They rushed out; and Tausdorf, shaking his head, exclaimed, "It is an evil spirit that is prevailing in this country."

After a short time Althea returned with her uncle, and presented the two guests to each other, when the old man said, "I have already heard so much worthy talk of you, Herr von Tausdorf, that I heartily rejoice in your more

intimate acquaintance. You are in the imperial service?"

"Captain in the emperor's life-guard," replied Tausdorf, with military dignity.

"As the Frau von Sternberg informs my niece, you intend settling in our good Silesia. I am glad to hear it, and whatever I can do for you, either in act or counsel, I offer you with great sincerity; but it surprises me that you should think of leaving Bohemia. I understand you are in favour with the emperor, and, since the imperial diet at Prague has given independence to the protestants, it must be comfortable living for them in the Bohemian territory."

"This favour little profits us Utraquists. In reality the bull of Pius the Fourth is already recalled. Strict catholics still hold us for sectaries and half heretics: add to this, the new society of Jesuits already lifts up its serpent-head, and hisses out its threats at us. Our religious freedom has almost come to an end."

"Yes, the Jesuits! the Jesuits!" exclaimed Schindel, and for a while was silent; then look-

ing sadly at Tausdorf, he continued—"So, you are no thorough-paced Lutheran, Herr von Tausdorf?—only a Utraquist?"

The latter bowed assentingly, and Schindel added, as if to soften his first expression, "The Utraquists too are honourable people."

"I hope so," replied Tausdorf, smiling at the intolerance which lurked in the well-intended affirmation.

"But keep that a secret here as long as it can be done; at least till the people know you better. The town, as well as the whole country, is zealously Lutheran."

"Pardon me; in the field I have learnt neither simulation nor dissimulation, and I deem them besides contrary to my honour as a knight. He who, on account of the Utraquist, overlooks the man in me, is only an object of my pity, and I set little value on his opinion."

A tumult in the street interrupted this conversation.

"What is the matter below?" said Schindel to the servant, who just then brought in a fresh flask of wine.

" A violent fray," he replied, " in the house of the widow Fox, in the market-place. Francis Friend quarrelled with Rasselwitz about a bay horse, and from words they drew their swords upon each other. The police have already interfered to put an end to the tumult."

" Gracious heavens!" cried Schindel, clasping his hands, " will this disorder never have an end?"

" The crime," returned Tausdorf, " was settled in this room by the violent young nobles. I immediately suspected the evil that would come of it, and warned them, but in vain."

" God reward you for the good intent," said Schindel, and he proffered his hand to him with unfeigned cordiality: " There is, indeed, a necessity for rational people interfering in these mad affairs, which are now unceasing between the nobles and the citizens; one fray always creates a multitude, and in the end both parties will be ruined by them."

As he spoke the door was violently thrown open, and in rushed the breathless Netz, sword in hand.

"For heaven's sake, what has happened?" cried Althea, anxiously.

"Under favour, sister," panted Netz, sheathing his sword: "Allow your servant to fetch my horse directly. He will find it in the stable at Barthel Wallach's. I must be off this hour from Schweidnitz, or I am lost."

At a sign from his mistress the servant hurried out.

"But what is really the matter?" asked Schindel, pressingly: "You have no doubt been again doing in your wrath what is not right before God."

"We went," said Netz, binding his pocket-handkerchief about his bleeding arm, "to fetch the horse which Francis had promised Rasselwitz. In the house we stumbled on him and some fellows of his own stamp. From words it soon came to blows. The fray grew hot; my servant was flung into the well: still, however, we stood our ground fairly; but then came the police upon us with the whole tribe of city officers, and we were overwhelmed by numbers; Bicler was killed; Rasselwitz wounded

and taken; I saw that standing out would lead to nothing but death or a dungeon, laid about me like a boar at bay, and fortunately cut my way through."

"Men, men!—how will you answer for that which you have done?" exclaimed Schindel, sorrowfully.

"What! are we to take any thing and every thing of these citizens? It may perhaps be Christian-like when one cheek is smitten to hold the other; but to strike again is human, and I do not wish to be any thing better than a man."

"The son of the worthy intendant killed!—and his murderer the son of the all-powerful Erasmus!" exclaimed Schindel—"It will be a war of the Guelphs and Ghibellines!"

"Your horse stands below," said the servant, returning: "Your lad saved himself in good time from his cold bath, and brought it hither."

"My horse waits below too," cried Tausdorf, taking up his gloves and hat: "With your permission, Herr von Netz, I will accompany you beyond the boundaries. The irri-

tated citizens may mean evil to you if they find you yet within their jurisdiction."

"I accept your offer with thanks," replied Netz, hurrying out. Tausdorf kissed Althea's hand and said—"I thank you heartily for your friendly welcome; it seemed to me as if my dear native land greeted me with your lips, and I only grieve that our first meeting should be so brief and so unkindly interrupted; but I purpose repeating my visit, if the widow of my deceased friend will allow it."

"You will always be welcome to me," replied the beautiful widow, in embarrassment; and the hands, which had been joined seemed to grow together, while her uncle called out from the window, "Haste! haste! Netz is already mounted, and the police are coming up the streets from the market with a whole rabble of armed citizens."

"Farewell!" said Tausdorf, hastily, and disappeared; and Althea, darting to the window, cried out after him to be careful of himself. The armed multitude approached; Netz, forgetting his companion, gave his horse the spurs

and galloped off. In the meantime Tausdorf came out of the house, sprang lightly and nimbly into the saddle, and sent up a last friendly greeting to the window. In the same moment he was surrounded by the rabble. Several rough hands seized his horse's reins, while about him crowded a threatening array of pikes, maces, and firelocks; and a wild shout arose of —"Another of the murderers!—tear the scoundrel from his horse!"

"What would you with me?" said Tausdorf, sternly:—"I have had no share in this unhappy quarrel."

"Found together, bound together!" shouted the rough rabble: "You must ornament the town-jail."

With this the boldest amongst them seized the knight's legs to pull him from the saddle.

"Respect to the imperial colours, ye citizens of Schweidnitz!" exclaimed Tausdorf, and gave his horse the spur and the curb at the same time. The noble beast reared and struck about him with his fore-hoofs, to the sore dismay of those who held the reins, and who im-

mediately let them go ; and the knight, thundering out to the mob to make way, now struck the rowels into his horse's flanks. In an instant two powerful plunges freed him from his enemies. A loud cry of mingled joy and terror echoed from Althea's window, while Tausdorf sprang over the rabble that were rolling upon each other in confusion, and rushed out of the gates at full speed.

" God be praised !" said Althea, as she left the window, exhausted by her feelings: " I was in terror for the brave knight."

" In terror ?—already in terror ?" asked her uncle mockingly, and, going up to her, he seized her hand—" Look me fairly in the face, niece."

For a moment she cast her eyes down, then raised them up to him with difficulty ; but the effort to keep a steady gaze on her uncle's brow kindled a rosy glow upon her own. He went on, however, without mercy—

" And now, niece, as plain an answer: if this Bohemian should ever ask you to become his wife, would you in that case declare your-

self as roughly as you have done this day to your other suitors?"

"You torment me," said Althea, with gentle reproach. Her hand slipped from his, and she fled out of the room.

"'Tis a clear thing!" said the uncle to himself—"Well, I have nothing to say against it; the man pleases me—I wish he were not a Utraquist!"

The lovely Agatha, the daughter of the city messenger, Onophrius Goldmann, sat at the window in her humble chamber. The spindle rested in her hand; on her lap lay an open volume of the songs and tales of the master-bards, but her hazel eyes wandered from the book to the darkening street, and her bosom heaved beneath its drapery. "Twilight," she exclaimed, "twilight is already coming on, and still my father does not return. O that no accident has happened to Francis!" At this moment, some one burst open the street door,

and rushed into the chamber;—it was Francis Friend.

"I have had a glorious row with the vagabond nobles," he cried, embracing the maiden roughly, "and the mad Netz has flayed my arm, but I think I have paid him for it, in a way that will make him remember me. Bind up the wound, Agatha."

"Wicked man," replied Agatha chidingly, as she stripped off the sleeve through which the blood was welling; "you are always running wantonly into danger, and care not for the anxiety which I suffer on your account."

"What, am I to let those vagabonds steal the horse from my stable? In the end they'll quarter themselves upon me, and drive me out of house and home."

"You hate the nobles so violently, and yet have married the daughter of a noble!"

"Unfortunately! And I do believe it is on that very account she is such an abomination to me; but I shan't be such a fool again. My wife won't be much longer on her feet, and when she is unharnessed, my next choice is

soon settled; a girl of low rank, when she is as beautiful as my Agatha, is dearer to me than a dozen countesses."

"Flatterer," murmured Agatha, winding her arms about his neck, while her kisses burnt upon his lips.

"Gracious Heaven!" cried a deep-base voice, and the lovers started from each other in terror. —Onophrius Goldmann stood at the open door, his left hand hid in his doublet, and supporting himself with the right, for he was exhausted almost to fainting; but his eyes shot lightning at the delinquents. Francis in vain sought to recover from the shame of surprise to his usual braving tone, and Agatha wrung her hands and wept.

"So you have at last succeeded, master Friend, in seducing my child," said the wretched father. "May God reckon with you for it!—and you, obstinate girl, have I not warned, prayed, threatened? Did you not swear to me to shun the man who makes you thus unhappy? How have you deceived me!—a long time deceived me, with your wicked artifices; for, from

what I now see, your sin is not of to-day. These are the consequences of the infernal love-songs and romances, which ought to be utterly forbidden to women; their place is at the hearth and the spindle. The mad trash, invented by the dry brains of the poetasters to tickle your nobles, is for them poison. There it is they learn to build up air-castles in the midst of reality—there it is that they find every passion painted in fine colours, and, before they dream of it, their honour is gone, and—God deliver us!—their eternal salvation also."

"I give you my word," at length stammered Francis, "that Agatha's honour shall one day be redeemed before the world."

"You!" cried Onophrius,—"a husband! Heaven have mercy on us! Would you send your wife after the murdered Netz, or, like count Gleichen, get a dispensation at Rome for a double wedlock?"

"Not so rough, old man," exclaimed Francis in a tone of menace; "I don't like to hear such language, nor does it become the servant towards his master's son."

"That is the curse which rests upon the poor and lowly," exclaimed Onophrius, crawling to the nearest chair, and sinking down upon it, exhausted. "It is our curse that we are powerless, and weaponless, and lawless, against the great who wrong us, while, over and above all, we must spill our blood for our tyrants. Maimed in your defence, I return to my hovel, find you in the arms of my seduced child, and when my just anguish pours itself forth in words, you meanly appeal to your father's rank, and close my mouth by despicable threats."

"Maimed!" cried Friend in alarm, and Agatha flew with loud lamentations to her father, who, drawing his left arm from his doublet, showed the stump, bound up in bloody cloths.

"Eternal mercy! your hand!" shrieked Agatha.

"It lies before the house of the widow Fox, in the market," said Onophrius gloomily; "Netz hewed it from the arm just before you killed him."

"It grieves me; but on my honour I will make all good again."

" That is more than you can do : though you were to empty out all your gold-bags into this room, yet would no hand grow again upon this stump; though you were to dress my child in brocade, and adorn her with pearls and diamonds, still she would be your strumpet, over whom I must tear the grey locks from this aged head. Gracious Heavens ! how little must you gentlemen think of us poor people, that you fancy all is to be satisfied with gold,—all, life and limb, honour and conscience ! Well; God is just, and will one day weigh you in even scales, and find you too light for his heaven."

" Only let two eyes be closed first," protested Francis, " and if I do not then take home your Agatha as my wife, and make you a man of consequence in the city, you may call me villain in the public market-place."

" My good Francis," exclaimed Agatha, affectionately, and gave him her hand, even before the eyes of her stern parent.

" If we both live," said Onophrius, with peculiar emphasis, " if we both live, I will remind you of your promise; but I fear that we shall

not get so far; I fear that this day's tumult will have worse consequences than you imagine. That Bieler has been killed is a sad misfortune. The nobles will be mad, and I already begin to shudder at the idea of the jail and the scaffold."

"Is Bieler, then, really dead?" asked Francis anxiously, after a long silence.

"I saw him carried as a corpse to the Guildhall," replied Onophrius. "The thing, too, happened naturally enough. As my left hand flew off, I cut at his head with my right, and you soon after made an end of him."

"Upon all this we 'll be silent to every one," said Francis, who had again collected himself. "For the rest, the whole business is of no great consequence. I was acting in self-defence; and you were only doing your duty. If any ill have grown out of it, Rasselwitz, who began the strife by breaking into my house, must be the sufferer."

"That won't satisfy the nobles," said Onophrius, shaking his head.

"Let them bite away their anger upon their

nails," exclaimed Francis boastfully. "My father is master here in Schweidnitz, and will not let them hurt a hair upon my head."

"*You* are safe,—but *I!*" replied Onophrius, thoughtfully.

"You stand and fall with me, old friend. If I ever forget you, or what you have this day done and suffered for me, may God forget me in my dying hour!"

"Amen!" murmured Onophrius with failing voice, and, swooning with the loss of blood, he dropped from his seat.

"He is dying!" sobbed Agatha, as she caught her father in her arms.

"This is a day of evil," shouted Francis, gazing for a moment on the mischief he had wrought, and striking his forehead wildly with his clenched hands, he dashed away.

It was two days after this when the tumult of voices, the stamp of steeds, and the clatter of iron, woke Althea from a morning sleep, which had been troubled, yet beautified, by delightful

visions. In her thin night garments she hastened to the window, and saw the streets full of horses, which were led by armed knights. The clang of harness, in the meantime, resounded up the stairs, and a party of knights entered the room in complete armour and closed vizors. The leader of them threw up his beaver; it was the wild Netz.

"Under favour, sister, I bring you a whole bevy of cousins, nobles, and good friends, who are all dying with desire to kiss your fair hand, and would, moreover, beg a breakfast of you."

"What brings you, gentlemen, so early to Schweidnitz?" asked Althea in alarm—"in such warlike guise too!"

"The lord bishop, Caspar, visits the city today," replied Netz, to speak a few serious words, as prince palatine*, with our council here, on

* The title of Prince Palatine is far from being a correct translation of the original, for which, indeed, we have no corresponding phrase, the political organization of this country supplying no corresponding authority. In such a dilemma nothing is left to a translator but to choose between two evils; either to retain the original term, or to adopt from his own language any word that may convey something of a similar idea. Perhaps I have been wrong in my choice.—Certamen est de paupere regno.

the score of Bieler's murder. Now, as we know by experience that the citizens have hard heads, and are easily excited to uproar and all sorts of mischief, we have come to give the proper weight to the bishop's words with our steel, if need should be. The strongest party of us have quartered themselves at Barthel Wallach's, because we did not wish to fill your house too full, and we have sent out a watch to give us immediate notice of the bishop's coming, till when we would rest with you, and enjoy ourselves."

At his signal every vizor rattled up, and from every helmet looked a well-known face, that greeted Althea with respect, and amongst them she recognised Tausdorf.

"How! you here, Tausdorf?" she cried, with a vivacity that confounded her own self.

"That surprises you, does it not?" exclaimed Netz. "Troth, when he so bluntly refused to join us in fetching the bay, I had no idea that he would enter upon such an adventure as the present one. But he offered himself of his own ac-

cord, which indeed has made me wonder not a little."

"In that there is nothing for wonder," said Tausdorf, gravely. "I have always remained the same. With justice I refused to take part in an action which I deemed illegal; but I hold it for my knightly duty to be in the saddle when it is to defend the authorities of the land, and support them in their sacred office against factions and those who would take the law into their own hands."

"Let that be, my worthy countryman," said Netz; "we 'll not dispute about our principles. It is enough for me that we have got you, that you belong to us, and hold the pedlers in the wrong."

"Not so unconditionally as you imagine. The evil originated with the nobles. Whether upon this the citizens too did not go beyond their bounds, that must be inquired into by the palatine, and punished accordingly. We nobles are a party in the matter, and have therefore no voice in the decision."

"In the name of Heaven, Tausdorf, whence

have you borrowed this lamb-like patience? Did not the rascals wish to fling you into jail, though you were more innocent of the whole transaction than a new-born babe? Did they not seize your bridle, and try to pull you from your horse?"

"That was long ago forgiven and forgotten."

"Eh! What! The hounds must not venture to fall upon a knight! The bishop must obtain for you a brilliant satisfaction."

"Satisfaction to the law, not to me. The bishop has disputes of higher import to settle, and I should be ashamed to trouble him with this trifle."

"You are a brave knight!" exclaimed the old Schindel, who had been sent to them by Althea, and, having entered unnoticed, had overheard the conversation—"Happy were our principality if all these gentlemen were like you! Then again might grow and flourish the tender olive-tree of civil peace, which the hand of Maximilian so lovingly planted, but at which both the nobles and citizens are pulling and

dragging with equal violence, so that in the end it is likely to perish, to the grief of all those who mean it fairly with the land."

"The old man," cried Netz to his companions, "will often say things that we do not like to hear; but one can't be angry with him, because he means it so well with us."

"And because, alas! he is always right in his rebukes," added Schindel, as two servants entered the room with flasks and goblets.

"God be thanked!" exclaimed Netz, and immediately filled himself a goblet. "I was beginning to feel faint about the stomach, and then one is in poor plight for a fray. Fall to, comrades."

The knights complied, and each stood with a goblet in his iron hand:—"But, not to forget the main point," continued Netz; "we have not yet talked of who is to be our leader in this business, which yet is necessary in case it should come to blows. That must be settled directly on the spot."

"Why, who but yourself, brother Netz?" exclaimed Hans Ecke of Viehau: "You have

been riding about, and sending round your messengers through the whole principality, till you have whistled us all up to this expedition."

"No, I am not fit for it," said Netz frankly; "I am a better hand at blows than at leading. I should be for hammering away upon the mob at once, and might do you a mischief.—What say you to it, old gentleman?" he added, turning to Schindel.

"You must excuse me. I am about to settle in quiet at Schweidnitz, and must not quarrel with the council and the citizens; but if my opinion have any weight with you, elect Tausdorf. He has vigour and courage for it, and moreover the requisite discretion, which you shatter-brains are deficient in, one and all, and which will be most especially needed in a matter that is intrinsically evil. Besides, he is an imperial officer, whom you may all boldly follow without casting a blot upon your nobility."

"The old one must always give us a rap on the knuckles," said Netz, laughing; "he can't

go less; but in the main he seems to me to be right; therefore, whoever amongst you thinks the same, let him draw his sword."

"Tausdorf shall be our leader!" shouted the whole band of knights, and fifty swords glittered in the air. In the same moment Netz's 'squire rushed in, exclaiming, "Two of the bishop's equerries have dismounted before the Guildhall; he will be here himself in a quarter of an hour."

"Halloah! To horse! To horse!" cried Netz, rushing to the door with his drawn sword. The rest were about to follow him with unsheathed weapons, when Tausdorf thundered out, "Halt!" At the word the knights stood still.

"Put up your swords before you mount," he said, in a tone of stern command.

"Wherefore?" asked Netz, returning angrily.

"You have chosen me for your leader in this business," answered Tausdorf, with all the dignity of command, "and it is your duty, therefore,

to obey me; but I am not bound to account to you for every thing I may order. For this time, however, I am content to tell you my motives. Should we ride with drawn swords, the citizens and magistrates might take it for a hostile incursion, or, if they are evilly disposed, might merely pretend to do so, and oppose us with arms, in which case, when the bishop entered the city, he would find the civil war already kindled, which it was the purpose of his coming to avert. Will you answer for the bloodshed that may arise from such a trifle?"

Netz silently sheathed his sword; his brothers in arms followed his example.

"And now, with God, to horse, gentlemen," added Tausdorf, kissed Althea's hand in silent fervour, and strode out. The knights hastened after him.

"What a man!" exclaimed Althea, as in the overflow of feeling she sank upon her uncle's breast.

"You are right, niece," replied Schindel, with emotion: "Let him be ten times an Utraquist, yet he is a noble, strong-minded man, and

with pleasure should I one day lay your hand in his.

The old burgomaster, Erasmus Friend, paced up and down the large arched chamber of his stately stone mansion, in his official insignia, his hands behind his back, and gloom upon his wrinkled forehead. Just then crept in the doctor of law, Esaias Heidenreich, a thin little man, with a face of cunning.

"Well!" exclaimed the burgomaster, "have you found it out? What would the bishop?"

"Just what I prophesied," replied the doctor, shrugging his shoulders; "he would inquire into this bad business himself, and submit the decision to the emperor."

"That is against our privileges," cried the burgomaster, indignantly. "The penal jurisdiction belongs exclusively to our city in all cases."

"I would not affirm that so unconditionally. Besides, that is no longer the question. His

grace, the right reverend bishop, chooses to look at the affair in his own way: the only point then is—*quæritur*—whether you will submit to the authority of the prince palatine, or not? And upon this you must make up your mind speedily, for in a few minutes he rides into our good city."

"The priest need not be always poking his nose into what is not his business. I won't submit."

"Will you then entirely break with the noble old man, who entertains such favourable and tolerant opinions towards all *Acatholicos?* And if, after all, he should choose to maintain his authority by force?"

"Then I order our civil troops to mount, and the corporation to be under arms. Within my walls I am master, and no other."

"But whether the common weal will gain any thing by the measure? I must submit that to your wisdom. Think of the evils which the Smalcald league brought on us eighteen years ago—of the shameful contribution which the town was forced to pay—of the imprisonment

which the *consul dirigens*, Furstenhau, had to suffer in the White Tower, at Prague, and here in the Hildebrand. This time, too, it may turn out still worse. Your opposition may be construed into open rebellion: what the penalty of that is, you know as well as I do, and also that Schweidnitz is compassed about by enemies. The land-nobles hate us violently, and the emperor's wrath would find a thousand willing and lusty hands."

"Should I now begin to be afraid of these lordlings, in good truth I were neither worthy nor able to fill this my place of honour. Only let them come. We will so receive them, that they shall think of the old Erasmus all their life long."

"The lord bishop has just dismounted from his horse before the Guildhall," announced the city servant, Rudolph, while his teeth chattered. "The council is already assembled, and all wait for your worship."

"Ring out the alarm-bell," shouted Francis Friend, following close upon his heels. "The land-nobles have rode up to the market-

place, in complete armour, near five hundred strong."

"Have they committed any disturbance?" asked Erasmus, hastily.

"No," replied Francis, "nor have they even drawn a sword. They only stand in the market-place, quite still and orderly, as is by no means their way at other times; if you ask what they want, they give themselves out for the retinue of the prince palatine."

"Who leads them?" inquired Erasmus with smothered wrath.

"That I know not," replied Francis; "they have all got their visors down."

"I heard," said Heidenreich, "that their leader is a certain Sparrenberger, surnamed Tausdorf. He has lately come hither from Bohemia, and intends settling in this country."

"Sparrenberger, surnamed Tausdorf," repeated Erasmus bitterly, taking out his memorandum-book and writing in it: "I shall recollect the name again at a fitter season."

"Shall I have the alarm rung?" asked Francis urgently.

Again the old Erasmus began to pace up and down the chamber with long strides. The passion for resistance struggled mightily with the sense of its danger in the breast of the vigorous despot. This was perceived by Heidenreich, who approached him and said with anxious warmth: "If the advice of an old lawyer have yet any weight with you,—and one too who means it fairly with you and the city,—submit yourself for this once, master burgomaster. That, which Francis proposes to you, leads directly to feud with the emperor and the empire, and ruins yourself, and your family, and the town which is entrusted to your providence."

"You will keep yourself quiet, Francis," at length said the old man, after a heavy sigh of self-control. He then turned to Heidenreich —"You will accompany me to the sessions."

With dignified pride he stalked out, and Heidenreich, following him, exclaimed, "Heaven be praised!"—while Francis stamped with his feet, and rushed out after them like a maniac.

The burgomaster, Erasmus Friend, had just taken his place at the council-table amidst many long pale faces, when the attendants in servile haste and anxiety threw open the folding-doors, and the bishop of Breslaw entered, Caspar von Logau, a venerable and hale old man; with him came the hauptmann of the principality, Mathias von Logan. The members of the council rose respectfully from their seats, while Erasmus coldly advanced to the first authority in Silesia. The bishop addressed him with dignified earnestness:

"There have been evil doings in your city, Mr. Burgomaster. I take it for granted you have, as a first step, adopted fitting measures that the state of facts may not be concealed, and that the culprits may not escape punishment by flight."

"The beginner of the fray is arrested," replied Erasmus, "and the body of the deceased is in our care."

"Whom do you understand by the beginner of the fray?" asked the bishop, looking keenly at Erasmus.

"Rasselwitz," replied the burgomaster with eagerness, "Rasselwitz, who broke into my son's dwelling like a common robber."

"You will render up the prisoner to my delegate, which ought to have been done immediately on his arrest. The body of Netz we will presently view together, and then deliver it over to his relations for burial."

"You seem, my lord bishop, as if you would bring this case under the emperor's jurisdiction: but, according to our privileges, the trial and the sentence belong to us, and I must give up nothing of the city's charter."

"There is danger in delay, and therefore we will not waste the time in legal disputations. I will answer for what I do, and the emperor himself shall decide upon the competence of the tribunal. Against this, I presume, you can have nothing to object, Mr. Burgomaster."

"No!" replied Erasmus, with heavy heart and suppressed indignation.

"How is it with the answer on the part of the citizens?" continued the bishop, bringing forth a roll of papers, from which he read—

" According to the charge of the Bieler family, there were present and active in the fray, your son, Francis,—the city-messenger, Onophrius Goldmann,—the city-servant, George Rudolph, and a cutler's apprentice.—All these too are, of course, under arrest."

Erasmus was silent, for he felt his error, and was too proud to justify it.

" No!" exclaimed the bishop. " Immediately take measures for bringing them hither under a secure guard. *All*—do you hear me? *all*, not excepting your own son."

The burgomaster was silent, and did not stir, while in his breast rekindled the strife that had scarcely been subdued.

" Well, gentlemen, am I to be obeyed?" cried the bishop, advancing with indignant majesty to the sessions-table, by Erasmus' upper place.

At this there started out of the hall, as if actuated by one spirit, the aldermen, Peter Treutler and Balthasar Albrecht, to fulfil the commands of the bishop, who continued to Erasmus—

" I am almost displeased with you, Mr. Burgomaster, and I hardly know what the em-

peror, to whom I must communicate this unhappy affair, will say to your proceedings. You Lutherans are constantly harping upon the holy Scriptures, and will be judged only after their words. Well, then, have you not read what the wise king Solomon says, 'Love justice, ye rulers of the earth, for injustice lays waste all lands, and evil life overthrows the seats of the mighty?' But what is to be thought of the equity of a judge, who imprisons the party of the murdered, and suffers the assassins to be at liberty, because his own son is at their head?"

This reproach touched exactly on the sore place, and cut so much the deeper into the soul of the proud elder; he was just about to burst forth in all the vigour of his mind, and with indignant zeal for the authority of his office; but then doctor Heidenreich advanced to him and whispered soothingly, "Since you have determined to submit, do it with a good grace, and make not a bad matter still worse by unseasonable passion." Upon this Erasmus collected himself by a violent effort, champed

down the words which he had just been going to hurl against the bishop, and, retreating to the window, gazed indignantly at the nobles, who kept watch on horseback before the Guildhall, in close compact ranks, like so many colossuses of iron. In the mean time, the bishop seated himself in the burgomaster's arm-chair, reading over his papers, while so profound a silence reigned, that one might have heard the buzzing of the flies in the room and the heavy breathing of the anxious aldermen.

At length Treutler returned, followed by Rasselwitz, his arm in a sling, the poor one-handed Goldmann, and the rest of the accused. Armed city-mercenaries brought up the rear.

The bishop rose from his seat to observe the comers, and exclaimed to them authoritatively, "You are prisoners of the emperor and king of Bohemia, and of his chief tribunal at Prague. Give up your arms!"

"We recognize only the assize at Schweidnitz as our judges in this matter," retorted the wild Francis defyingly, in the name of all.

"Is that the respect, Mr. Burgomaster," asked the irritated bishop—"is that the respect which you show to your prince and his laws? I had heard much of the arrogance of the patricians here, and of the Friend family in particular; but this audacity even exceeds my expectations."

"Give up your sword, Frank," said Erasmus with broken voice.

"Sacred heavens!" cried Francis, painfully alarmed—"do you yourself command it, father? Then, indeed, I must obey:"—And he unbuckled his sword, laid it on the council-table, and returned to his companions, who followed his example. The alderman Albrecht now announced that the body of Bieler was brought into the custom-house below.

"We will inspect the corse and confront with it the accused," said the bishop to Erasmus: "you will then separate all parties, and bring them into safe custody. I give them over to you—you alone; but you shall answer for them to the emperor and myself with your head."

He went out with Matthias and Rasselwitz. The council with their prisoners and retinue followed; only the burgomaster remained behind, and grasped Heidenreich firmly by the hand, so that the latter could not join the cavalcade.

"Now, thou prince of peace!" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth—"had I not done better by causing the alarm to be rung?"

"If you are convinced that such a measure will tend to the general weal," replied Heidenreich, "you may take it still. I would have you weigh, however, that five hundred warriors are drawn up yonder, well armed, and ready to support the bishop's orders. The result of the fray is uncertain, and even if we were to conquer, what would be the fate of all of us?"

"Ah! these nobles!" cried Erasmus furiously. "Well! some opportunity of revenge will yet offer itself, and, by God and his holy Gospel, I will seize it by the forelock—it shall not escape me."

On the Friday after George, in the year 1571, sate Francis Friend, with broken spirits, in the Hildebrand of Schweidnitz, his constant quarters since the time of his arrest. It was already late in the evening, and a melancholy lamp partially illumined the sad chamber. The long durance had subdued the wild refractory mood of the prisoner: even the wine no longer relished. He leaned with his head in his hands upon the table by the side of the full flask, and took all the pains imaginable not to think, that he might escape from the recollections and forebodings which tormented him. The door now gently opened, and doctor Heidenreich, creeping in, roused him out of his gloomy meditation.

"Your worshipful father sends me to you, master Friend. You fate seems to be approaching its decision; and I am come, therefore, once again to speak to you alone about this awkward business of yours."

"Make me no long prefaces, master doctor," cried Francis, starting up wildly, "but speak it out plainly. My sentence is pronounced; I

am to die. Well, then, I am content. I have often before this looked death boldly in the face, and would rather perish at once than pine away any longer in this damned hole."

"Always so hasty and impetuous!" said Heidenreich, and sate down quietly by his side. "The question is not yet of the final sentence; but, as a preliminary measure, the rack, in all its degrees, is adjudged to Onophrius Goldmann, and to that they proceed this very night. The delegates of the council will also be present. It is, therefore, above all things requisite to know for certain how deeply you are implicated in the Bieler murder, that the necessary precautions may be taken. Your answers at the examination have by no means satisfied the lords commissioners, nor, to be candid, myself either. Now, therefore, I come to put to you a couple of questions, which you must answer me, but honestly as a son to a father; for, look you, I am to defend you when the examination is over, so that I should be considered, *in jure*, as your physician and confessor, to whom you must speak the truth if you wish to be radically healed.

First, then, tell me, did you in the fray actually strike Bieler upon the head with your sword?"

"There you ask more than I can answer," replied Francis with vexation. "The row was all wildness and confusion; I was half drunk too, and rage made my intoxication still madder. I came up roundly to my opponent; but whether I hit Bieler, or whether I did not hit him, that the devil knows best."

"You don't answer me honestly," said Heidenreich with lifted finger, "and thus without occasion impede my colloquy. You must not, therefore, take it ill, if I put my second question as though I were already convinced of your guilt. Did Goldmann see you strike Bieler? or at least does he pretend to have seen it?"

"He chattered something of the sort to me a little after the fray," replied Francis in confusion.

"That's an awkward circumstance. How in other respects do you stand with the man?"

"Well, I think."

"There was a talk in the city of your in-

triguing with his daughter, and having promised her marriage when your wife should die?"

"Likely enough. In need or in pleasure men make all sorts of promises that they are not inclined to keep afterwards."

"Well, as in the meantime your wife is really dead, we might try with this bait to stop the mouth of Onophrius, so that he may leave you out of question altogether when he is put to the rack. I will go to the old man directly and reason the matter with him. If I can make it clear to him that your misfortune will do him no service, he may, perhaps, take good advice. Meanwhile don't let the time in prison hang heavy on your hands, and be of stout heart. I hope to God that I shall this once also draw you out of your anxiety and suffering.

"Could not you save Goldmann too?" asked Francis good-naturedly: "It would grieve me for the poor devil if he should have to pay the piper."

"That would be rather difficult. Some victim the nobles must have, and you may rejoice if they will be satisfied with the old messenger.

However, I will see what is to be done for him, if he stand the torture without confession. God be with you!"

He went, and Francis continued sitting gloomily at the table. The peril, which with every moment approached nearer and nearer to him, straightened his breast sorely. His confidence in the all-powerful protection of his father had already sunk to a very low ebb, and the comfort left him by the doctor did not go a great way either.—"The infernal bay!" he muttered at last, glad to have found something on which he could lay the consequences of his own action—"the infernal bay!"—and he relapsed into a long melancholy silence.

Suddenly there arose below a loud noise and trampling; halberds clattered against each other; doors were opened and shut; and then again a deep awful stillness prevailed.

"What is the matter below?" he anxiously asked the jailer, who then brought in his supper to him.

"Logan Oppersdorf and the other commissioners have just arrived, together with several

gentlemen of the council. Goldmann leads up the dance to-day!"

"God support the poor fellow!" groaned the agonized Francis, and ran about the chamber, goaded by all the pangs of hell. Quick footsteps were heard approaching the door: it flew open, and in burst Agatha with dishevelled locks, despair upon her pale, tearless face, and flung herself at the feet of her lover.

"Save, save my unhappy father!" she cried, in tones that rent the heart.

"Collect yourself, my poor girl," said Francis, and raised up the wretched creature: "what would you from me?"

"The dreadful tale has reached even my hovel!" she exclaimed shuddering: "this night my father is to be put upon the rack. He is old and feeble; he will sink under the torture, and confess to deeds of which his soul knows nothing: therefore help, Frank, help, before it is too late. Your hand plunged us into this abyss; your hand must snatch us from it. You have solemnly sworn it to us, and must redeem

your word, that God may one day not forget you in your dying hour."

"Leave us alone," said Francis to the jailer; and when the latter had gone, he exclaimed to Agatha, "What would you have of me? You ask help of one who is himself most helpless. Would I be here, if I had the influence which you attribute to me?"

"Your father is all-powerful in this city," cried Agatha, wringing her hands. "It is a trifle for him to help the man who is now to suffer for having saved your life."

"My father's hands are bound by the bishop and the furious nobles. Could he govern at his pleasure, he had surely saved his own son from the grief and shame of a prison. But I have done what I could, and your father's cause is commended to good hands."

"I will believe it," said Agatha, suppressing her feelings, "though I find you terribly cold to a sorrow that concerns you so nearly."

She was henceforth silent, leaning her head on the shoulder of Francis, who embraced her

in indescribable anxiety, while the silence of death prevailed in the dungeon. On a sudden, through the nightly stillness broke a hollow shriek from the lower chambers. Francis had a foreboding of what it meant, and shuddered; Agatha listened intently to the groans, which with every moment sounded sharper and more agonized.

"Eternal mercy!" she suddenly cried in wild horror; "that is my father's voice!"

"Perhaps we deceive ourselves," said Francis, endeavouring to soothe her.

"That is my father's voice," screamed Agatha; "I should know it amidst thousands. It must be the pangs of hell that can extort such cries from the iron old man. Gracious heavens! And I hear his shrieks and cannot help him!"

"Cease," cried Francis, beside himself; "you torture yourself and me with more bitter cruelty than any he can suffer on the rack; and you torture us in vain, for by the Almighty I cannot help, though with my own blood I would purchase his!"

Agatha fixed her eyes upon him with a cold

piercing gaze of inquiry, and said, "Are you in earnest, Frank? Would you really purchase his life with your own? Well then, call in the jailers; let the judges be requested to suspend awhile the torture: confess yourself the assassin of Netz, and my father is saved."

"And I lost!" exclaimed Francis. "You ask of me more than is reasonable!"

"I was not in earnest," said Agatha contemptuously. "I knew beforehand that your own wretched life was dearer to you than any thing else, and I merely wished to shame the boaster who affected a magnanimity to which his miserable heart can never elevate itself. Father, I *cannot* save you; this man *will* not. I can do nothing, therefore, but pray for you in the hour of your suffering, that the All-merciful may comfort your soul and preserve it from despair." —And she sank upon her knees; her lips moved softly, and her eyes, turned up to heaven, overflowed with gentle tears, while the cries of agony from below grew fainter and fainter, and at length were silent altogether.

The maiden arose and stood again before

the trembling Francis; with awful calmness she said, "A horrid light is beginning to dawn upon me. It seems to me as if my poor father suffered for your crime, the wild vengeance of the nobles absolutely exacting blood in atonement for the blood which has been spilt. It seems, too, as if you were well content to buy yourself free with this expiatory sacrifice. Once again, therefore, I conjure you, Francis, exert yourself for us. If you could not rescue your saviour from the pangs of the rack, at least preserve his life. Save it not merely for me, save it for yourself! For I swear to you, by the agonies of this dreadful hour, if my father perishes, you too are lost! I will bend all the energies of my soul to your destruction; I will steal after you through life as your evil demon, till at last I reach you and hurl the lightnings of vengeance upon your guilty head!"

She rushed out.

"This is a night of hell!" groaned Francis, and dropt back, as if annihilated, into his seat.

It was about the same time of the year, that Althea was sitting in her chamber by the open window, through which played the gentle spring-breezes. Her little Henry drew about the room, on a wheeled platform, a stately knight, proudly mounted, in the full equipments of the tournay, Tausdorf's present to him from Nuremberg. With this he kept up an intolerable clatter, but his mother did not heed him. Before her stood the embroidery frame, in which she had stretched a scarf, but she did not work; and, lost in fairy visions, she listened to the humming of the bees that swarmed in the blossoms of an apple-tree before her window. Then on a sudden echoed the sweet song of the nightingale from the topmost branch, and Althea's bosom swelled in gentle heavings; her eyes became moist, she folded her hands, and with pious looks to heaven, exclaimed mournfully, "Forgive me, Eternal Benevolence! if this feeling be a sin against the memory of my Henry."

"Where now does Herr Tausdorf tarry?" interrupted the child. "He promised to be here early to-day."

"Was the speech of innocence an answer to my prayer?" whispered Althea; and, beckoning the child to her, she took him on her lap, caressed him with fervour, and softly asked him, "Are you then fond of Herr Tausdorf, dear boy?"

"Yes, indeed, from my very heart," replied the little one. "He is always so kind to me, brings me pretty things, and has often let me ride upon his gray horse. I love him more than uncle Netz and all the other knights who visit you. He does not swear and curse so terribly as they do, nor drink such monstrous quantities of wine. I have never either seen him drunk, like uncle Netz, who often cuts a vile figure with the fiery face and glassy eyes. Then he is always so kind and sedate; and I do not know how he manages it, but when he bids or forbids me any thing, I cannot help obeying him, however great my inclination to be froward."

"But you are fond of uncle Schindel?" said Althea, to conceal her delight in the child's answer.

"Oh yes! but then he is a little too old for me. I always think of him as of my grand-

father: while Herr Tausdorf is still so handsome, and full of life and energy. It is so I fancy my father must have looked. Oh, if Herr Tausdorf were my father! I would follow him at his nod, and love him—almost as much as yourself, dear mother."

"Sweet boy!" cried Althea transported, and hid her burning forehead in the golden locks of the child.

Three slow, orderly raps were given at the door, but occupied with other matters, she paid no attention to them; at last in walked Christopher Friend, in splendid doublet and rich pantaloons of sky-blue velvet, slashed with green, and trussed with gold points, and a broad collar about his neck of real Brabant lace. With great courteousness and much dignity, he waved his richly feathered cap in salutation. The first glance, that Althea cast upon his crafty knavish face, extinguished every spark of joy in her breast, and with icy coldness she asked what was Master Friend's pleasure?

"Noble lady, I have lived long enough in the dreary state of widowhood to know all its inconveniences, and to desire a change. I

want a wife of good person, good birth, and gentle manners; and, considering the great wealth with which the Lord has blest me, I believe myself well worthy of such a one. Worthiest Althea, my choice has fallen upon you. It has, indeed, cost me no little eloquence to wring from my father his consent to this match, of which he would not hear at first, on account of the violent quarrels between the nobility and citizens and the mutual bitterness that has grown out of them. At last, however, I succeeded in bending his obstinacy, and chiefly through the faithful picture of your excellent virtues; and here I am, with his blessing, to woo solemnly for your fair hand."

"I value your courtship as I ought," replied Althea, hastily; "but with my conviction that we are in no respect suited to each other, I answer with a candid *no*."

"*No!*" repeated Christopher, dropping from the clouds. "With such proposals, it is the custom, although the lady have a negative in her pocket, at least to ask time for considera-

tion, from mere courtesy. Your *no,* therefore, is almost too candid."

"I could not prevail upon myself to let you believe in the possibility of our union, even for a moment."

"I should think, though, that the petty estate which you hold at Bogendorf in your widow's right can be no reason for your rejecting so splendid an establishment thus scurvily."

"Then you thought to buy me of my poverty? —Another sign how little we are suited to each other, for I have never regarded wealth."

"That shows your fancy for the Bohemian ragamuffin!" retorted Christopher, whose wrath had burst every curb of manners. "I always wished to persuade myself out of the idea of your caring for the vagabond, but now it is on the sudden clear to me that I am sacrificed for him."

"Have the goodness yourself to repeat your aspersions to him," cried Althea warmly; "but this room you will quit instantly."

"Why should we mutually incense each other without occasion?" said Christopher,

quickly composed again, and courteous. "You have rejected my love, which must, indeed, grieve me; but, at least, you cannot prevent me from wooing your friendship; and rest assured I will show you mine so thoroughly, that you shall yet one day rue your harshness."

He bowed himself profoundly, and departed.

"That is an abominable man," said the little Henry. "Had you married him, I do believe I should have run away from you."

"My horizon grows more and more cloudy," sighed Althea. "I fear there will be no staying for me much longer in the old Schweidnitz, for the hatred of these Friends is terrible, from their wealth and their enormous power."

"Oh, if they ill-treat you," cried the little one warmly, "only call Tausdorf to your help, he'll soon send them about their business! And I too am a nobleman: let me once be capable of bearing arms, and I'll maul this rabble of citizens that it shall do your heart good to see it."

Althea hastily set down the little nettle which began to sting thus early, and asked in anger, "Did you ever hear such words from me or

from the knight Tausdorf, whose name is always in your mouth?"

"No," stammered the terrified child, already struggling with his tears; "but uncle Netz, and the rest of the knights, call the Schweidnitzers by no other name when they talk of them."

"Have these then so suddenly become your models? Formerly you were of a different opinion; but shame upon you for so soon forgetting the lessons of your mother. What have I told you of the different classes in the world?"

"They are all established by God," repeated the boy, amidst a flood of tears, "and therefore the high should never despise the low, for he is his brother."

"And what did I say to you of the citizens and peasants?"

"They are for the whole more useful and indispensable than the noble, who in reviling them disgraces himself."

"You, then, have disgraced the nobility which you are so proud of. Go to your own room, and reflect with yourself seriously upon your injustice, and pray to God to forgive you

such want of charity. That you may have leisure for this, you shall neither play nor eat till the evening."

"Dear mother!" said the little one imploringly, and raised his folded hands.

"I am fixed," she replied with great earnestness; and the poor boy left the room slowly and with loud sobbings.

"God grant me strength to banish this evil spirit, the last in the pure mind of my child," prayed Althea fervently, as her brother-in-law, Netz, rushed into the room with wild unceasing laughter. Vexed at this interruption of her better thoughts, she exclaimed, "What have you been about now?"

"Oh, I have been enjoying a fine piece of sport. Since we were here with the bishop, your cits have had a little respect for us, because they see that we hang together manfully. So we touch them up now and then, till they are ready to run against the walls from terror."

"Alas! I have already heard much of this kind of exploits, but in truth they do you little honour."

Netz, passing over the remark, continued:

"Just now I amused myself with riding on my war-horse into a publican's house, and even into the tap-room on the ground floor. The old witch of a hostess crept forward immediately, and, quaking and trembling, begged of me to dismount; but I cut as furious a grimace as I could, and roared out, 'Pity on the noble blood that has been spilt! let any one of the Schweidnitzers come abroad, be he who he may, and he shall have a warm reception; ten of us have sworn to avenge the murder.' Zounds! you should have seen how the old one's knees tottered, and three citizens, who had been sitting behind the table, crept into a corner with their cups. Then turning round my horse, I dashed out, while the windows clattered again."

"And you would palm off this adventure upon me for a chivalrous achievement?" said Althea with cold mockery.

"How perverse you are," replied Netz; "it was only a little joke of mine with the rabble. They 'll tell it again in the city, which will be in a proper fright; and, whenever a chuff creeps out of his hole from necessity, it will be with fear and trembling."

"What would you say, brother, if one of the people were to ride into your hall, as you did with those honest men, who had in nowise offended you?"

"God confound him! I would hang him up by the legs."

"Would it have been wrong, then, if the citizens had taken courage, and done as much to you?"

"Zounds! that's a different thing," said Netz, stroking his whiskers.

"How, different? Perhaps the citizens of Schweidnitz are your serfs, without any rights against their master?"

"You catechize me too closely," replied Netz, confused, "tell me rather—to come to something else—what is the matter between you and Christopher Friend? As I was riding up the streets to your house, he met me, tricked out wonderfully, but with a face more horrible even than that I made in the tap-room. What did the money-bag want with you?"

"He asked my hand," returned Althea, going on calmly with her embroidery.

"And you sent him off with the willow? By my word as a knight, that does you honour, for the pitiful scoundrel has gold enough to buy half the principality; and there is many an honest woman, before this, has made herself over to the devil, for the sake of wretched mammon. You have not only acted like a noble lady, but like a prudent woman, who well weighs every thing. It was not out of love that he sought your hand, but to make peace between his kin and the nobility through you, and afterwards you would have found his house a hell."

"What evil thoughts does hatred put into the minds of men! I did not dream a syllable of any such secondary objects, but refused him simply because I felt no inclination for him."

"Nay, that of itself is a poor reason, with which you have already put off many honourable men, and even lusty knights too. Don't you intend to marry again at all?"

Althea turned away in silence to get another ball of silk from her work-basket, and at the same time to hide the colour which this question had

brought upon her cheek. Netz, having long listened for a reply, exclaimed, "I understand! no answer is often a very decided one. Now I am at home. You intend sure enough to marry, and I already know the bridegroom. Shall I name him to you?"

"Spare me your thoughtless gossiping," said Althea, with anger, that did not seem to be too seriously intended.

"You defy me? Well, then, I should be a fool to spare you any longer. The lucky chosen one is called—"

At this moment Tausdorf entered the room.

"When one talks of the wolf," added Netz, laughing, "he is already looking over the hedge. That is my man."

"Oh, you are the most intolerable tattler that I know of!" said Althea, rising, and offering her hand to Tausdorf with a confused smile.

"Intolerable!" muttered Netz; "that again is somewhat strong, as indeed your phrases towards me generally are. You think I don't understand without rough language; yet in truth you ought to handle me quite tenderly,

and thank God that I look at the matter on the merry side: were I disposed to take it up seriously, and quarrel with my fortunate rival, you might sooner be a widow than a bride, or else have to cry your bright eyes red over the corpse of your poor brother-in-law. But compose yourself; it shall not be so bad as that I have at last learnt to see that you are in the right with your negative. Every creature of the field would be mated with its like. Now you are as tender as the sensitive plant in the park green-house; you would be touched only lightly with the finger-tips; while I love to grasp with my whole hand, and don't always even draw the gauntlet off first. In any case, we should make a strange couple. It is better, therefore, that the whole business should be let alone, and, if I can yield you to any one without grudging, it is to Tausdorf, who seems to have been made by Heaven expressly for your wilfulness; and who, moreover, is such a lusty knight. Your hands, then, my dear friends:—In the name and in the spirit of my good brother Henry, I give and pledge you to

each other, and you shall exchange the troth-rings before my eyes."

"I pray you at length be silent," said Althea, whose confusion was at its height; and with unfeigned emotion she added, "it has not yet entered into Herr von Tausdorf's head to be a suitor for my hand."

"So, then, I have again missed my aim! That you will never make me believe. It is only a sort of feint, that your womanly affectation would yet use as a parting farewell. Strike at the very core of it with your good sword, Tausdorf; I will be your faithful brother in arms."

"I could only accuse myself, if I had not understood this noble heart," said the knight tenderly, kissing Althea's hand. "But this letter of my father's will show you that I have understood it, my dear friend; still, I owed it to your repose and my honour to shut up the ardent longing in my own breast, until every barrier was forced that lay in the path of my happiness. That is done. The weightiest obstacle was the difference of our creeds: but

rational arguments and filial entreaties have subdued my father's strictness of belief, and he now participates in my wishes, and sends us his paternal blessing."

With trembling hand Althea took the letter and read it, while her eyes sparkled with joy.

"Strange that the old gentleman should make objections for a little difference in religion!" said Netz: "Why, if Althea cared about priestly feuds, she might with better reason object to your Utraquism. But I see it well, it is in this case just as if a fair maiden were smitten with a Moor. Love levels all, and before him there is neither creed nor complexion."

"The Moor returns his thanks," replied Tausdorf laughing, and followed Althea to the window, where she stood with folded hands in deep thought.

"Have I understood your heart?" he asked gently and tenderly.

"Only too well," she murmured; "and yet in this decisive moment an anxious doubt falls on me, whether I do right in listening to it,

and whether it is compatible with my duties towards my child."

"Fire and fury, sister!" shouted Netz, impatiently, "I believe you are still coquetting it: by my faith! even the best women can't leave that alone. I fancy when you one day come to the gates of heaven, you 'll stand courtesying to St. Peter, and protesting that you don't think it polite to enter, till he hales you in by force. What new difficulty have you been spinning and weaving on the instant?"

"My little Henry," lisped Althea, with downcast eyes.

"Whose interest, you think, is against this marriage?" said Netz, laughing: "Now that, in good truth, is a little out of reason, for to me it seems as if it would exactly tend to his advantage. But I 'll do as though I believed you in it. Where is the boy?"

"A prisoner in his room till bed-time."

"The devil! Yours is a strict government! But wherefore?"

"He spoke contemptuously of the respectable state of citizenship."

"Death and hell! By that I see the blood of our family flows in him—And 'tis therefore you have imprisoned the noble fellow! Zounds! I can fancy, then, how you would have managed me, if you had given me your fair hand in marriage: I should never again have got out of the cellar into daylight. No, that won't do; I'll not stand it. I am the boy's uncle, and have also a word to say in his education."

He rushed out, but at the door was met by the old Herr von Schindel, to whom he exclaimed, "Your niece has grown restive, and positively won't enter the stall of matrimony; do you teach her better—I go for help:"

With two springs he was up the stairs and at Henry's door, while Schindel entered to the lovers.

"Do you then doubt my having a father's feeling for Althea's child?" said Tausdorf to the widow, deeply mortified.

"It is not that alone," she stammered; "it seems to me as if a second marriage would be a treachery to my first husband; and that one

day, in a better world, I should not be able to come before his eyes, if I contracted a fresh union here below."

"Fie! fie! niece," cried Schindel, gravely; "so good a Christian, and so little versed in the Bible? Have you not read in the holy scriptures, what sort of answer was given to a similar doubt, and who gave that answer? "there will no one marry, nor be given in marriage?" and your departed lord will thank Tausdorf, with a brother's love, for having made his Althea happy in the time of her earthly pilgrimage, when he himself was no longer able."

"Heaven reward you for these words, my dear uncle," exclaimed Tausdorf joyfully, grasping the old knight's hand, when Netz burst in, the little Henry in his arms, and setting him between the lovers, on the ground, cried, "Stand here, boy, and decide: your mother is going to marry again; whom would you like to have for your father-in-law?"

With a loud cry of joy the child sprang up to Tausdorf, and clasped his knees, looking up to him with a sweet smile of affection.

"My son!" exclaimed Tausdorf, in emotion; and he lifted up the little one in his arms, and kissed him warmly.

"Then join your mother's hand with his," continued Netz.—The boy stretched out his hand after Althea's, and said, in a sweet soothing tone, "Dear mother!"—She remained, however, timidly at the window, and did not move; upon this Tausdorf carried to her the little Henry, who seized her arm with gentle violence, and joined the feebly-resisting hand with the extended right-hand of the lover, at the same time exclaiming, "Always so! always so!" and covering the two hands with kisses.

"My Henry!" stammered Althea, and inclined her face to his.

"Is he not *our* Henry?" asked Tausdorf, hastily putting down the child, and with his arms clasping the tender body of Althea.

"In the name of Heaven!" she replied, scarcely audible, while his lips sank upon hers.

"What Heaven does is well done!" said the old Schindel, with folded hands.

Netz shouted out aloud, "*Victoria!*"—In the next moment he passed his mailed hand across

his eyes, and, unmanned by keen and sudden agony, rushed out of the apartment.

Eight days after the Whitsuntide of the same year, the morning twilight lit up the horizon with a dusky red, and painted with blood the walls of the Hildebrand, in which Francis was still quietly slumbering on his couch. Before him stood the old Heidenreich, who seized his hand, and called upon his name to wake him. At the call he started up wildly, and inquired peevishly and sleepily why the old man disturbed him at such an hour? "Sleep is precisely the best thing that one can enjoy in a dungeon."

"I bring you weighty, and in some sort pleasant, news. That I come with it thus early is to prepare you for the events of the morning. Yesterday arrived the emperor's final sentence—your life is saved. The imprisonment which you have already suffered will be reckoned in part of your incurred penance; and, *mense Septembris anni currentis*, you may expect your freedom."

"Am I to rot then so long in a dungeon? That is an unjust severity, as I neither confessed the fact, nor have been convicted of it; and one may easily see that the emperor deems himself the first nobleman in the principality, by his siding thus with the lordlings."

"Not yet contented? Thank God, on the contrary, that the sentence has turned out so exceedingly mild. I can assure you, when the sentence was read in the sessions-room, the impertinent alderman, Treutler, observed, *Dat veniam corvis vexat censura columbas!* You were heavily accused: had not Onophrius been silent on the rack, had not your father subdued his old pride, and made most suppliant petitions to the emperor himself, and, lastly, had I not managed your cause in a veritable masterpiece of defence, you would have had a serious business of it to-day."

"And how has it gone with the old Goldmann?" asked Francis anxiously.

"Faith," replied Heidenreich, shrugging his shoulders, "his head will be off in an hour."

"Gracious heavens!" cried Francis, starting

up from his couch, "it is not possible! The old man acted only in his office; and if he did kill Bieler, his life cannot be touched for it."

"The imperial council have seen the affair in a different light," replied Heidenreich coldly. "They think his office had been to separate and arrest both parties, you as well as Rasselwitz; and not, out of partiality to the burgomaster's son, to kill his adversary."

"But I entreated you for the poor man!—and you, too, promised."

"I did to the utmost of my power whatever could be done, and as far as it could be done without your injury: your father, too, the same. Thrice did the council apply to the emperor in Goldmann's behalf, and the last time was dismissed ignominiously for their pains, and forbidden farther interference. Defendant was not to be saved. Some one must have killed Bieler: Goldmann confessed upon the rack that he had struck at the young man's head; about you he was honestly silent, and thus, therefore, devoted himself for an atonement."

"Horrible!" cried Francis, and paced about

the room, wringing his hands. On a sudden the clang of the funeral bells vibrated hollowly and slowly from the tower of the guild-hall; when, in obedience to the signal, from every turret throughout the city, the metal heralds lifted up their solemn voices, producing a singularly sad and awful echo in the silence of the morning twilight.

"What means this tolling of the bells so early?" asked Francis, with a fearful foreboding.

"It is the funeral toll of the poor Goldmann," replied Heidenreich, leaning himself against the window. "To show publicly that the council deems the imperial sentence too severe, it has allowed this last honour to the condemned; the body, too, will be followed by the whole college to the burial-ground of our Lady *im Walde*."

"A melancholy kindness!" exclaimed Francis, shuddering; and after awhile he added, "first the hand, then the rack, and at last the head. Oh, it is horrible!"

"See, there comes the procession!" cried Heidenreich from the window; and in spite of

the horror that seized him at the news, Francis yet felt himself irresistibly attracted to look on that which he dreaded. Just then the old Onophrius was passing before the window. Free and unfettered, he walked with calm confidence between the city soldiers who accompanied him, while no marks of the fear of death were to be seen upon his venerable, pale, cheerful countenance; and a garland of white roses adorned his silver locks, which were fluttered by the morning breeze.

Loud weeping was heard from the assembled people; even the iron Francis sobbed bitterly. At this moment the old man lifted up his eyes and maimed arm to him, and cried out with a strong voice, "I have forgiven you all! Only make good as much as you are yet able, and you shall not find me amongst your accusers before the judgment-seat of God." With this he went on cheerfully to the place of execution, while Francis howled and pressed his face against the iron grating of the window.

The sufferer's head had fallen. The noise of the people returning from the burial, and

the sudden silence of the bells, awoke Francis from his mental lethargy. He looked up, and found himself alone.

"It was an evil hour!" he cried, rousing himself; "God be praised that it is over.—How! not yet torture enough?" he added the instant after, seeing Agatha, who just then closed the prison door behind her.

In deep mourning, with hollow eyes staring out of a pale, meagre face;—in her hand the garland of white roses which her father had worn on his last travel, she stood for a long time at the door, a threatening Nemesis. She then glided nearer with a light step, and planted herself close before the terrified Francis, whose hair began to stand on end.

"My father is no more," she murmured in the tones of death. "I have even now seen him to his final place of rest, and am come hither to execute his last commission. He has been silent: he has died to save you; and he has saved you that you may restore to his only child the honour of which you robbed her by crafty seduction. In his last farewell he said,

'I will believe that, with the best inclination, Francis had it not in his power to rescue me; but let him take you home as his wedded wife, which is his duty, and which he has promised me with deep oaths: thus he will at least have made good as much as he was able, and my shadow is reconciled.' Now, then, I am here to remind you of your oath."

With infinite confusion Francis stammered out, "Yes,—that,—dearest Agatha—for the present, at least, that cannot be done. I do not depend upon myself alone."

"You are a widower, and childless," said Agatha, with great composure.

"But my proud stern father will never consent to such an alliance," objected Francis.

"You have long been of age and wealthy, and therefore independent," said Agatha, in the former unimpassioned tone; "give me better reasons for your perjury."

"I suppose I can't be married to you in the Hildebrand!" cried Francis, with the angry impatience of mental agony.

"Oh father! what you have asked of me

is hard," sighed Agatha, struggling with her feelings; "but I must obey." And, as in that dreadful night, she flung herself before Francis, and embracing his knees, besought him—"Give me your hand, and with it give me back my honour."

"Let go of me, woman!" he cried, tearing himself with violence from the kneeling Agatha. "By heavens, I cannot do what you desire!"

"You cannot?" she returned in a terrible tone, and rose up; "You swear by Heaven that you cannot?—You are right. What does a perjury, more or less, signify to you? It is quite well so, perhaps better than if I had softened you for the moment. Now then I may confess it to you: it was only obedience to the martyr that compelled me to this measure. I had other intentions with you; but my father's command tied up my hands, which your utter unworthiness has again unfettered. Think of what I told you in the night of torture. My father has now really died for you—you have rejected the atonement which he offered you through me, and vengeance can now take her

course, softly, slowly, and securely. May this thought scare sleep from your bed and drop wormwood into the cup of your joy, till you one day see me again adorned with this blood-besprinkled garland, as your bride for the life yonder in the torments that have no end."

She glided out of the room; Francis stood there for a long time as if petrified, when, collecting himself, he called out for the guard.

"Goldmann's daughter," he said to the city servitor, who then entered, "has been uttering dangerous threats out of rage for the execution of her father. Every thing is to be feared from her malice,—fire and murder, poison and uproar! for who knows what abettors she may have already gained by her strumpet artifices? Arrest her, therefore, immediately, and announce it to the council. I take upon myself all responsibility with my father."

The servitor ran off; but in a little time returned with information that Agatha, after quitting the Hildebrand, had disappeared so quickly, that no one knew which way to follow her; her dwelling was quite deserted, and it was

probable she had turned her back upon the city.

"That's bad," said Francis thoughtfully; but his old, daring recklessness soon returned, and he exclaimed, "What does it signify? the malicious wench will take good care, I should hope, not to come back to a city in which my father governs: no one yet ever died of mere threats, and I doubt not to reconcile to my conscience the not having allowed the daughter of the beheaded city messenger to talk herself into the honourable family of the Friends."

It was in the beginning of the July 1572, that Althea sate at a splendid dinner-table with her uncle Schindel, her brother-in-law Netz, and a few ladies of distinction; but the rich dishes seemed to be there merely for show, for the sun was already low in the west, and still the meal had not yet begun.

"Your betrothed stays long," said Netz,

gaping, and tapping with his knife upon the silver goblet before him. "He was to have been with us about the middle of the day, and now the evening will soon be here. You must break him in better for the holy state of matrimony."

"His protracted absence begins to alarm me," replied Althea. "I trust no accident has happened to him on his long journey."

"Who would begin fearing the worst so soon?" admonished Schindel. "Recollect, niece, how much he had to do at Tirschkokrig, and Prague, and Vienna. Such a change of habitation for life brings with it a heap of business. The explanations with a beloved father, whom one would not pain, the quitting of the service of a powerful master, who unwillingly parts with the true servant—all these are things that are not easily got over. It is very possible that he may yet have to stay a day or two over."

"Well, God be thanked!" cried Netz—"He has been a year in Bohemia, and so has had time to manage his removal to Silesia."

"Only a year?" sighed Althea; "to me the time has seemed much longer."

"Not a complete year yet," interrupted Schindel. "It was in the September of the foregoing year that Francis Friend was released from his confinement, and it was the very day before that Tausdorf went to Bohemia."

"Don't mention a word to me about these Friends," growled Netz, dashing the goblet on the table. "You drive the gall into my stomach, and then the wine does not prosper with me. It will stick with me all my life long, that this villain, who alone was cause of the mischief, should have crept, with a whole skin, from under the sword of the executioner!"

"It must have been because they could prove nothing against him in respect to Bieler's death," objected Schindel, "or else the emperor had made a severe example of him also."

"I have ever heard," said Netz, "that in such investigations all depends upon the manner of questioning; and the judge, if he rightly understands it, can interrogate a rogue into an honest man, and an honest man into a rogue.

With me Francis will always be Bieler's murderer, and if I had not given my knightly word and hand to the lord bishop to let the matter rest, I would yet call him to account for it."

"Still Tausdorf comes not!" interrupted Althea with affectionate anxiety.

"And in the mean time," said Schindel, "we have lost the guests who were invited for his reception. Rasselwitz and Seidlitz were to be gone for an hour only, and neither of them is returned yet."

"I wish Rasselwitz may not be dangling after the fair Netherlander," replied Netz, "and have forgotten Tausdorf and his welcome!"

"You must always be wagging your tongue at me," cried Rasselwitz, who just then entered, and had caught the last words.

"Well, and do I lie?" asked Netz: "Are you not led in a string by the fair stranger?"

"Would to Heaven she only thought it worth her while to lead me! but at present she cares little about me."

"And yet you are always dangling after her, and paying court to her when and how she

pleases. What a great fool should I be if I were to suffer myself to be so trotted about, and all to no purpose! Love's pay must follow love's service, or else I care nothing for love, or all the women of the earth."

"Time brings roses. I don't yet give up all hope."

"Holloa, gentlemen!" cried Schindel; "this is a conversation for the tavern when you can no longer tell Hungary from Rhenish. How can you think of amusing the noble ladies here present with your courtesans?"

"You are in a gross error, Herr von Schindel," said Netz warmly. "The lady, of whom we speak, by no means belongs to that loose craft. Since she has lodged with the Dutch nurseryman at the Park, she has led so still and retired a life, that she may well be set up as a model for other women. Besides, the splendour of her clothes and furniture betokens great wealth, as her dignified manners are a sign of her high birth."

"And yet lodges at the Park?" retorted Schindel; "and allows the young men free ac-

cess to her? That is strange! But who is she, and what would she here? It does not at all please me, when a handsome female wanders about the world in this way without protection."

"Thus much she has confessed to me," said Rasselwitz; "her abode here has a mighty object; but what that object is she does not as yet hold me fit to be entrusted with."

"If the girl should have some evil design towards you?" said Schindel thoughtfully. "We have many a warning-tale from the olden time of young libertines having been allured by some beautiful unknown, and, when at last they fancied themselves at the goal of their wishes, they grasped in their arms a hellish monster. At all events you will do well to be cautious with your new acquaintance."

He was interrupted by the slow approach of footsteps. Supported by Seidlitz, Tausdorf tottered into the room, and with a friendly smile upon his pale features, stretched out his arms towards Althea, who instantly hastened to the man of her affections, exclaiming, "Gra-

cious Heavens! what has happened to you, Tausdorf?"

"A slight accident, not worth talking of. As I was entering the town-gate my horse shied and would not go forward, and, when I attempted to force him on, he reared so high that he fell over with me."

"And you have been wounded by the dreadful fall?"

"Oh, no. I did, indeed, strike my head against the pavement in falling, but my hat broke the force of the blow."

"Has your horse ever shown such vice before?" asked Schindel.

"No," replied Tausdorf. "You know my old gray: he was the most docile beast that I ever rode."

"Then this accident strikes me as something singular," rejoined Schindel, "as if it were an omen intended by Providence to warn you of some great evil at hand."

"Don't say that with so much earnestness, my good uncle," exclaimed Tausdorf, laughing, "or you will terrify my Althea unnecessarily;

and if she should fall sick upon it, the mischief which my bay's restiveness is supposed to prophesy would then have really come to pass."

"I should like you as well again if you had a little more faith," replied Schindel angrily. "Animals have often a sharper insight into the realm of spirits than your overwise men. Think on Balaam's awful history. It would not be the first time that a horse shied when he was bearing his master to his ruin. Who knows whether it is well that you have just now rode into the town?"

"Herr von Schindel is the faithful Eckart, and warns every one," cried Rasselwitz with forced laughter, and seized the goblet to wash down his anxiety, while Netz exclaimed—"Are we not at last, then, to sit down regularly, and fetch up our lost dinner-time?"

"Do so, good cousin, and take my place," replied Tausdorf, who since Schindel's last words had grown unusually grave and gloomy: "My honoured guests will easily excuse me if I leave them for my bed: I should make a sorry

host to-day, for my head is somewhat stunned and dizzy from the fall, and repose will be the best thing for me."

He bowed, and left the company. The faithful Althea anxiously followed him.

" A tedious melancholy feast for a welcome," muttered Netz.

The guests looked at each other with disturbed countenance. A painful silence spread over the whole party, and the old Schindel put his finger to his nose, and said, " I keep to it still; this adventure is a very doubtful omen: God turn all to the best!"

The two brothers, Christopher and Francis, had come to see the splendid aloe, which was at the Dutch nurseryman's in the park, and was then unfolding all the glory of its blossoms. Both were not a little astonished at meeting here, for at other times the way of the one was

regularly not that of the other. Bareheaded, and with all the respect due to the rich Patricians, the gardener opened to them the door of the particular green-house, in which stood the giant plant. From the midst of enormous prickly leaves the stem rose up like a tree, to almost three times a man's height; from that again a multitude of branches had sprouted perpendicularly, each of which bore a multitude of colossal flower-tufts, so that many thousand flowers showed themselves together, offering to the astonished eye the appearance of an immense nosegay.

"This splendid aloe, called also *Agave Americana*," said the gardener, haranguing in a monotonous tone, and repeating the same thing for the hundredth time,—"this splendid aloe has come to Germany from the new world through Spain; it reaches a very great age, sometimes a hundred years, flowers only once in its long vegetable life, but that once, as we see here, with such an extravagant prodigality of its best strength and noblest juices, that it thereby draws on its own death, perishing en-

tirely after it has completed its time of blooming: on this account it is a great rarity, whenever we can get to this wonderful sight in our climate, which in fact is not over favourable to this miraculous and beautiful plant."

The brothers had soon satiated themselves with looking at this wonder-work of nature, and had scarcely paid any attention to the gardener's set speech. At last Christopher said,

"This aloe must have brought you many a fair half-crown, master gardener?"

But Francis had long been peeping between the leaves after a handsome female, who sate at the end of the green-house under a blooming oleander, and seemed to be reading diligently in an old manuscript. Her brows were shadowed by white ostrich feathers that rose from a bonnet of the same colour; her auburn locks rolled down in luxuriant abundance upon a closely-fitting dress of purple velvet, girdled by a rich gold band; while a chain of gold-chased emeralds heaved up and down upon the laced kerchief which veiled her fair voluptuous bosom.

"Master, who is that handsome woman?"

said Francis to the gardener, in a low eager tone.

" Bona van der Noot," whispered the man in reply; " the widow of a rich Netherlander, who for four weeks has lodged in the upper floor of my house."

" The widow of a *rich* Netherlander?" asked Christopher, who now began to look after her, and in whom, to the natural delight in a beautiful figure, awoke also the calculating spirit of the man of wealth, desirous of heaping up still more to his collected money-bags—" Have the kindness, master, to help us to a nearer intimacy."

" She has once for all forbidden such things," replied the gardener; " but what would I not do to please you, Mr. Christopher?"

And going up to the fair stranger, he said respectfully, " Permit me, noble lady, to give way to the wishes of these gentlemen, and present to you the sons of our worshipful burgomaster."

" You are acting contrary to our agreement,

master," replied Bona, with gentle reproach. "My society has so little worth, and I feel so little desire to form new acquaintances, that neither party will thank you much for your mediation."

In the meantime Francis and Christopher had approached with profound inclinations; in doing this the former had got a full view of her, when he suddenly stood still with open mouth and staring eyes, and no sooner had he heard her voice, than he cried out at once, "That is Agatha, or the Devil!"

"What ails you now, brother?" cried Christopher in alarm; and Bona anxiously asked the gardener whether the young man had not sometimes paroxysms of madness.

"No; it cannot be she, however;" stammered Francis, retreating in confusion. "The rich clothes, the cheerful countenance—no, that cannot be the pale, haggard spectre that tormented me so cruelly in the Hildebrand—and now, too, the beautiful long auburn locks with the auburn eye-brows!—Agatha had dark brown

hair. Pardon me, noble lady, my mistake and rudeness; your great likeness to a girl, whom I knew only too well, had deceived me."

"Sir," replied Bona proudly, "you must yourself allow that this assimilation to some old flame of yours cannot be particularly flattering to me. To spare myself any farther such unpleasantnesses, nothing remains for me but to withdraw, and leave it to your own reflection whether it became you to insult an unblemished female, who sought the hospitality of your father's town."

She walked away with great dignity.

"God confound you!" cried Christopher to his brother. "This is now the second time that your madness has come between me and my object, when I was trying to weave a love affair. Had it not been for your senseless fray with Rasselwitz, I should have had leisure and opportunity to win the widow. It was your fault alone that the banquet was put off, from which I had promised myself so much. The refusal too, which the silly woman gave me in the end, I owe to the fear of your relationship.

No one would willingly have any thing to do with you, for wherever you come you make mischief, and that not merely from natural awkwardness, but from evil intentions. If, therefore, you frighten away my bird this time, I shall believe you do it on purpose, and have good reasons of your own for preventing my second marriage; in which case I shall speak a word in earnest with our father, and you will gain nothing by your tricks."

Thus scolding and grumbling, he went off, and the gardener went with him. Francis, however, had not listened to his lecture, but remained there gloomily, and with the sheath of his sword beheaded the valuable foreign plants that stood in their clay vases, in rows, upon a range of steps. At last he cried, "I was mistaken; but the likeness was surprising and really terrible. A horrid shuddering came over me as the well-known features menaced me from out the strange form; I felt as if some evil spirit stretched out his claws after me from the beautiful face. The devil take conscience! It has often embittered my life, and now, since the

affair in the Hildebrand, it will no longer let me have any real satisfaction."

There was a sudden rustling behind the glass door, through which Bona had disappeared, and to which Francis had turned his back. Glancing round fearfully to the place whence the noise came, he saw the magic image of the fair stranger, and he shook and shuddered as if in the frosts of fever.—"Heaven be merciful to me!" he cried,—clapped his hands before his eyes, and rushed out through another door into the garden.

No sooner had Francis left the green-house than Bona entered it through the side-door. For some time she looked after him as he ran along the principal alley of the garden, while her beautiful eyes sparkled with silent wrath, her right hand pressed itself violently on her throbbing bosom, as if she wished to keep down its heavings by force, and thoughts of evil seemed to furrow her lovely forehead. At this instant came tripping along from a side walk the knight, Rasselwitz, in all his bravery, as with hope and desire on his face he bent his way

towards the green-house. The moment Bona perceived him, the furrows smoothed themselves upon her brow, her eyes lost their fierceness, a gentle longing spread over her features, and she flung herself in a picturesque attitude on the garden-seat beneath the oleander. Rasselwitz entering, said in the softest tone, "I owe it to my good fortune, noble lady, that I find you here in this confidential loneliness, and can paint the feelings which glow towards you in my heart, without being interrupted by troublesome witnesses."

With angelic kindness Bona presented her hand to him, and drew him down beside her, gently murmuring, "You have often before protested your love to me, Herr von Rasselwitz, and I would willingly believe in it, but mens' hearts are more treacherous than the treacherous waves of the sea: Who would trust to them? who would answer to me for the continuance of the inclination which you fancy you feel for me—perhaps really feel at the present moment?"

Rasselwitz felt himself transported into the

third heaven by this accost, for she had never addressed him so before; and kissing her hand with fervour, he cried, "O that you would honour me so far, beautiful Bona, as to demand of me some proof of my sincerity!"

"Take care that I don't keep you to your word," replied Bona with a lovely smile. "I might ask something of serious difficulty, and you would then come off with disgrace."

"No, fair lady; you don't escape me so this time," protested Rasselwitz with great animation. "You must rather allow me to keep *you* to your word. Demand any proof of my love, as hard and earnest as you can devise, and, if I deny it to you, banish me from your presence for ever."

"Do you know the man who just now left the garden?" asked Bona with apparent calmness.

"Why should I not?" replied Rasselwitz. "It was Francis Friend, the wild son of the old burgomaster."

"Challenge him for life or death," said Bona, "and I am yours."

Rasselwitz stared at the blood-thirsty beauty, and at length said with a confused smile, "You must be jesting, noble lady? What good could you get by egging us on to murder each other?"

"There are many gates through which hatred may enter the human breast," replied Bona with piercing looks; "and, if that be true which has been told me, you also cannot possibly be a friend to this Francis."

"By heavens! I detest him as my worst sins, but I cannot challenge him."

Upon this Bona started up and demanded with a look of scorn and contempt, "Do you want the courage for it?"

"Only *you* dare ask me that," replied Rasselwitz, starting up in his turn; "and to you only could I give a cool answer. I have never shunned the game of swords; but my knightly word binds me; I pledged it to the prince palatine on the settling of that awkward business the other day, and, if the monster does not begin again himself, he will have quiet for me as long as he lives"

"Does not then the wish of your beloved

weigh more with you than this promise?" asked Bona in soul-melting tones; and, laying her hand upon his shoulder, she gazed on him with a look that glowed through his pulses and gave wings to them.

"You have not understood me, noble lady," replied Rasselwitz earnestly. "We are talking here of my knightly word, on which depends my honour, and consequently my earthly being. If this adamantine chain were to hold no longer, what tie in the world could be relied on?"

"A clever brain would know how to manage a quarrel, and yet throw the appearance of the first aggression upon his adversary. Rough and violent as this Friend appears to me, it must be easy to irritate him to unseemly language and vulgar action, and then you fight only in self-defence, which the bishop cannot take amiss."

"That would be bad work, lady, with which I cannot meddle. To evade a promise is to break a promise, and I am an honourable Silesian."

"Well answered," cried Bona with loud laughter, and reseated herself. "Take your

place again by my side, Herr von Rasselwitz; it was not so evilly intended. I excuse you from the combat for life and death, to which you seem to have so little inclination, and do you, on the other hand, excuse me for the future from your love-protests which you cannot prove. You have stood the first trial badly; I spare you the others."

"How! Your strange instigation was no more than a trial?"

"And a very badly contrived one too. How could I expect that you would believe me, in this deadly hatred against a man whom I saw to-day for the first time in my life, and who could not have ever injured me?—me, a Netherlandress, who have lived but a few weeks at Schweidnitz? You would have caught me finely, and put me into an awkward plight, had you made as if you were willing to comply with my desire. I must then have prayed you, for God's sake, to let poor Friend live, and you would have had the pleasure of laughing at me soundly for my unsuccessful project."

"Fool that I am!—and yet I rejoice from my

heart that it was only a joke. I could not, however, suspect you of such a trick."

"Did you have a long merry-making on Monday at the widow's?" asked Bona, with a careless transition of the subject.

"Unfortunately, no; the bridegroom, whom we expected, had an accident with his horse, and arrived late only to go to bed directly. This untuned us all, and we separated at an early hour."

"I have already heard much of this bridegroom; but tell me more about him; he is said to be a handsome man."

"A perfect model of manly beauty!"

"That is saying much; yet since a man of your appearance allows it, why it must needs be so.—Brave?—that is understood of itself;—but I suppose just as hot and violent, just as easy to be irritated, which you gentlemen often wish to pass upon us for courage?"

"Nothing less. He is coolness and reflection personified, and on that account seems as if born to be a general. If he had not been the leader of the nobles on that decisive day which freed

me from arrest, it had unavoidably come to a battle in the city; the upshot was uncertain, and in any case Bieler's murderers had escaped punishment."

A flash of anger quivered through Bona's beautiful features, and the little pearl-teeth within her rosy lips were ground together firmly. But the external calm was soon regained, and she asked with her former indifference,—"Is this mirror of virtue and honour quite faithful to his Althea?"

"It is perilous to answer for any thing of this sort; but in his case I would almost venture it. He dwells on his bride with infinite affection."

"That proves nothing; you men may love warmly, and yet be false withal. Will you do me a favour, Herr von Rasselwitz?"

"Command me; I fly."

"Always supposing it is not for life and death," interposed Bona with light mockery. "But I have a desire to become personally acquainted with this Tausdorf, who is so much talked of. Besides I want to inquire of him

after a relation, who lives at Prague. Bring him hither with the first opportunity."

"It is asking much," said Rasselwitz jestingly, "to expect that I should myself introduce to you so dangerous a rival; but I build upon his fore-praised fidelity."

"If, however, you cannot, or like not, it is of no consequence. It was only a passing whim, which I can just as lightly give up again."

"By no means; and it is precisely to-morrow morning that your wish can be most easily accomplished, for the lady Althea then goes to Bogendorf, whence she does not return till the day afterwards, and she leaves Tausdorf behind that he may have leisure to recover from his fall. The singular plant, which is shown in this garden, shall be the bait to bring him. He will come to admire a blooming aloe, and will be agreeably surprised when the floweret of beauty unfolds to him the splendour of its colours."

He imprinted a fiery kiss upon Bona's hand and departed. The maiden looked after him

with a bitter smile, then rose up, and walked slowly into the green-house, where stood the aloe, which she considered for a long time, and at length said, "Yes, proud aloe, you are the image of my revenge. Your blossom requires years to break from the bud, but it does at last break forth in vigour that will not be restrained; and though you perish in the very moment of perfection, you have yet gained your object; he who has done that has lived long enough."

Beamless, yet with splendid glow, hung the evening sun, like a bright burning ruby in the horizon over the violet-coloured mountains. Purple clouds, edged with gold, shot a glory about it, while the whole western heavens shone in a sea of flame, and the blaze melted away farther on into a lovely sea-green, which again in the east was lost in the dark blue of night. Before the aloe, whose flowers seemed to burn in the evening red, stood Tausdorf,

sunk in its contemplation.—" The plant is to be envied," he said to Rasselwitz; " he dies well, who, like it, dies at the moment of reaching the pinnacle of strength and beauty; and I could almost wish that such a death might one day be to myself."

" How earnestly and gravely you take every thing," replied Rasselwitz—" nay gloomily too! For my part, it is precisely when I got to the pinnacle that I should feel most eager to live on, because it is then that life is gayest. When one is gone, the best pleasure is over; and in good truth we shall always be dead long enough afterwards."

" In the ten years of experience, which I have beyond you, lies the difference of our views. Throughout nature nothing stands still. He who does not go forward goes backward. From the summit the road only leads down again, and every retracing of our steps has something disconsolate about it, which I would willingly buy off with a few years of existence."

He turned about to depart, but Rasselwitz held him back:—" I cannot let you go thus;

you may, perhaps, have got over your accident, but you still look pale, and the evening wind blows cursedly cool from the mountains. Let us first, therefore, if agreeable to you, empty a flask of tokay against the bad air, and then I will myself accompany you home again."

"You gentlemen can't do without the wine-cup," said Tausdorf jestingly. "If, however, it is really to be but a single flask, I am contented."

They went accordingly into the larger greenhouse, where at the end, under an oleander-tree, a little table was neatly set out, covered with a crimson silk cloth. Upon this was a dish of foreign salad between two handsome flasks with handles, semi-transparent and edged with silver, and two glass goblets, ready filled, in which the tokay sparkled like blood in the last rays of the setting sun. By the table sat Bona in all the fulness of her charms, seeming to enjoy with silent transport the splendour of the evening heavens, whose crimson fire gave all the glory of a seraph to her head and face.

"We interrupt here," said Tausdorf to Ras-

selwitz, struck by her appearance, " and must seek some other place."

" You do not interrupt me, gentlemen," said Bona, rising with graceful kindness. " A woman, who knows how to maintain her female dignity, has no occasion to be afraid of men. But perhaps you wish to have a private conversation with your companion, in which case I give way to you, although I should have willingly enjoyed this splendid evening for a quarter of an hour longer."

" You love then the charms of nature?" asked Tausdorf, whose sympathy had been won by the first words of the stranger, and who now thought no more of going.

" What being of head and heart but must love them?" replied Bona warmly. " Nature ever reflects herself, and yet is ever new, nor has any mortal hitherto succeeded in imitating the least of her wonders: so has she gone on for centuries, silent and beautiful, clear and sublime, benevolent in creating and maintaining as in destroying."

" Nature," said Tausdorf with warmth, " has

always seemed to me like a perfect woman in the arms of the all-powerful—in the arms of a beneficent master and loving husband."

"You are probably married, sir knight," observed Bona roguishly, "by this image in particular striking your fancy?"

"Not yet," replied Tausdorf, colouring.

"But already promised and bound by indissoluble chains," interrupted Rasselwitz, to whom this brief conversation grew much too animated. "You have become so rapidly acquainted with the knight, fair Bona, that I must hasten to inform you, you are talking with the Herr Sparrenberger von Tausdorf, the betrothed of the Frau von Netz; and now take your place, my old friend, that the noble wine may not grow vapid, and pledge me to the health of your fair intended."

"I regret to-day, for the first time, that I have for ever renounced wine," said Bona, while the knights touched their glasses. "A toast to the health of so noble a lady would be well in place now."

"You know my Althea?" asked Tausdorf.

"No," replied Bona with lovely frankness; "but I have heard so much good of you, sir knight, that I believe you could have chosen none but a noble being for the companion of your life."

"Pray, lady," said Rasselwitz, breaking in upon them with vexation,—"did you not tell me to-day that you had a relation in Prague, of whom you had long heard nothing? Herr Tausdorf lived there a considerable time, and perhaps will be able to give you satisfaction."

"I thank you, dear Rasselwitz, for reminding me of it," replied Bona; "but it has already grown dark," she continued, looking round; "we had better order a light at the gardener's."

"Admirable!" muttered Rasselwitz; "she sends me away that she may be alone with him in the dark;"—and he hurried off with the speed of an arrow, to be back so much the sooner. In Tausdorf the same idea was stirring; but when he secretly asked himself the question, whether he did or did not like it, he could obtain no decided answer.

After all, the fears of the one and the ima-

ginings of the other were alike idle. The fair Bona kept at her old distance from Tausdorf, and entered into the most indifferent talk in the world with him, inquiring after a multitude of Prague ladies, whom he, indeed, knew by name, but of whom he could give no farther information. In addition to this, as Tausdorf could hear, she was playing with the silver lids of the wine-flagons, as the hands are accustomed to do when the mind is absent. This was all but an annoyance to the knight, and if he had not found some pleasure in listening to the melodious voice of the questioner, he would have experienced a real tediousness even in the familiar darkness and in the neighbourhood of such a captivating creature.

At length Rasselwitz appeared with the gardener, who hung a large mirror-lamp of Venetian glass upon a branch of the oleander, and again retired. The glasses were filled afresh, while Bona wound about the good Tausdorf with the finest arts of conversation, and contrived to flatter him so sweetly, and at the same time to inspire him with such respect, that he

was unable to break from the magic circle, although his correctness of feeling warned him betimes to fly from the danger before he was lost in it.

During this delightful talk, the wine, like a balmy oil, glided down the knights' throats, sweet and powerful; but its effects were manifested in the two with a very striking difference. While Rasselwitz grew continually sulkier and charier of his words, and at last became downright sleepy, Tausdorf's spirits were more and more awakened and joyful. A flippant coquetry, at other times hateful to him and foreign to his disposition, now prevailed in his manners to the fair stranger, who knew how to turn the well-polished diamond of her spirit so nimbly to and fro, that from its hundred points the flashes struck blindingly upon Tausdorf's eyes, and flung into shadow the image of the lovely, but simple and grave Althea. To complete the impression which she had visibly made upon him, the Circe, at a fitting turn of the conversation, took up a harp which lay beside her, and sang, accompanying herself a lullaby to her heart, than which nothing could be sweeter

or more alluring. While now Tausdorf kindled more and more at her burning looks, the soft tones of her song, instead of the heart which should have been lulled, soothed the good Rasselwitz into a sound slumber. The knight considered the sleeper with approving eyes, and then cast them, full of voluptuous desire, on the fair stranger.

"Cease, beautiful siren!" he exclaimed at last, seizing her white hand, and holding it firmly upon the strings; "your magic song disturbs me in my gazing on you. A woman, created for love, as you are, cannot lull her heart to sleep without committing a deadly sin against my sex."

With a heavenly smile, in which, however, lurked a strange glance, Bona looked at him, and her hand returned a gentle pressure. Then casting a look of inquiry at the sleeping Rasselwitz, she on a sudden sighed out softly and anxiously—"Oh, heavens!"

"What is the matter, noble lady?" cried Tausdorf, starting up, and caught her in his arms as she fell.

"A sickly oppression which will soon pass

over," stammered Bona, while her bosom heaved mightily against his breast. "Help me up to my chamber, dear Tausdorf."

Alarmed, anxious, thrilled through by strange forebodings, he obeyed her mandate; and half gliding, half carried, the lady reached her room with the knight. A dull lamp burnt on a table by the bed, around which flowed curtains of green silk, flinging a secret mysterious shadow. He let her down softly on the couch, and would have withdrawn, to call the maid to her assistance, but she raised herself up again, and winding her fair arms about his neck, murmured softly—"Dear man!"—and her kisses quivered on his lips like a kindling flash of lightning.

"Fairest creature!" he stammered, in the double intoxication of wine and passion. Wildly throbbed his pulses as if they would burst their veins,—and the lamp went out.

It was towards the morning when Tausdorf awoke from a heavy slumber. When on opening his eyes he found the sleeping Bona by his side, his recollection returned with the consciousness, and he sprang up in horror.

"Then it was not merely a wild dream," he exclaimed painfully. "How could I so forget myself! Never shall I forgive myself this error!"

He paced up and down the room with vehemence for a time, and then paused before the fair sleeper.

"The sin is beautiful which has seduced me from the right path; but that does not excuse a man from whom principles are to be expected, and who has taken upon himself important duties. Poor Althea! is this the reward of your love and truth? I never could have believed that to be possible which now rises to my revolted senses in disgusting reality. Ah! let no one boast of his virtue! It is often the prey of the most involuntary accident!—Of *accident?* —Was indeed all that happened to me yesterday no more than accident? I can answer for

myself—my soul was pure when I entered this house; and not till I was allured by the siren's song, and the voluptuous spirits of the wine had painted her fair form in glowing colours, not till then was the evil passion kindled in me. Could a few glasses have changed me so much? Could they have lighted up the wild glow that raged in my veins, and the dregs of which still lie heavy on my head and heart? The advances too of the stranger and her feigned sickness, which tightened the noose about my neck,—at the bottom of all this is some secret plan which I must unravel."

He left the room quickly, and soon returned with horror in his looks, and in his hands two half-full goblets, which he placed on the table by the bed, and had already raised his arm to wake the sleeper. At this moment the first sunbeams flamed through the darkness of the green curtains, and cast a warm glow upon her lovely features. Bona opened her eyes, which immediately sought and found her beloved, and rested upon him with bewitching tenderness; but she soon perceived the cold disdain that

flashed from his, and she started up from the bed in terror.

"For heaven's sake," she exclaimed, "what has happened to you? What do you mean by these fierce looks?"

"To ask you how we so soon became familiar with each other—how you so soon succeeded in seducing an honourable knight into disgraceful infidelity towards the mistress of his heart."

"This is a common injustice of you men to lay on the weaker sex the blame of the evil caused by your sensuality, that you may afterwards despise your victim, and so have a pretence for denying all satisfaction."

"You are right, but it does not apply here. We will not, however, say any more about which of us is the victim; only I must know whether some hellish arts were not employed in the adventures of last night, and therefore you must give me an account of these goblets."

"Gracious heavens! I am lost!" exclaimed Bona, without looking at the goblets, and clasping her hands together. Tausdorf went on:—

" This, with the white sediment at the bottom, stood before Rasselwitz, who still lies motionless on the seat, bound up in a death-like slumber. This, with the black dregs, I emptied, and I can now well explain the ebullition which threw me into your arms. Strumpet! have we drank poison at your hands?"

The beautiful sinner started up proudly, glanced at the knight with noble anger, and exclaimed, " Contemptible suspicion!" and snatched at the goblet with intent to empty it; but Tausdorf put back her hand—

" No! I would not place any soul before the judgment-seat ere the Creator calls for it."

He took the goblet from the table, and having flung it out of the window, walked up and down the room in silence; Bona wept.

" You would drink of it?" he continued. " There was then no poison in the goblet? But what else? For, by heaven, all is not right with this wine."

Bona hid her face in the pillows of the bed, and was silent.

" A love-draught, perhaps, for the chosen

victim of your desires, and an opiate for the troublesome witness—is it not so?"

Bona started as if a blow had struck her heart, and was still silent.

"In the name of heaven, woman, what made you seek out me in particular? You are fair enough, unfortunately, to be able to dispense with such means with thousands of my sex. Why must you fling into my breast the scorpion—which must poison the peace of my future days?"

"I loved you, as I now abhor you," was hollowly murmured from beneath the pillows.

"Profane not the sacred word," retorted Tausdorf indignantly; "I cannot, besides, rest contented with this answer. What you did yesterday, the way in which you prepared and accomplished it, the danger to which you exposed yourself if discovered, all this points to something very different. You had some great, and, as my warning angel tells me, some terrible, design upon me, and that it is which you must confess this very hour."

At this Bona started up with wild looks, and

her long auburn locks hung down in disorder, like so many living snakes, about her fair pale face, and gave it the convulsed appearance of a raging Medusa. "Kill me," she cried, defyingly, "or accuse me at the tribunal as a poisoner—I am silent."

Tausdorf could not refrain from shuddering as her figure stood up thus before him, like some horrid spectre,—that figure which but a few hours since had appeared so kind and graceful: he turned away from her, and at length said—

"You understand us German knights badly, in thinking us capable of such wretched measures. If you do not choose to unburthen your heart by a frank confession of your evil intentions, persist then in your obduracy. I leave you to your conscience; and however late may come the moment in which you hear its voice, yet the moment will come. If in such an hour you repent of the evil you have already done me, and of that which you yet purpose, may heaven not remember against you your heavy sin in abusing the fair body it has given

you—abusing it as a bait for vice, and to the destruction of the souls of your fellow-creatures. I for my part forgive you now as becomes a Christian; but we never see each other again."

He went. With the rolling eyes of a lioness, whose prey has escaped, Bona watched after him.

"So then, this sin has been in vain. I have not even earned the fruits of the evil harvest. My machines have been in play to no purpose. The awkward footsteps of this rough man have crushed to pieces the artificial wheelwork. Let it go. I meant it better with you than you deserved. The assailant has always the advantage, because he can choose time and place. If you will not be set upon my victim, he must be set upon you, that self-defence may force the sword of vengeance into your hand. May you both perish in it!"

The old gardener thrust his head in at the door with a crafty, inquiring laugh. Bona called out to him—"I am alone, Sylvester. What is Rasselwitz doing?"

"Awake at last!" replied the gardener, coming into the room. "He complained of head-ache, begged of me to excuse him to you, and tottered off. But in his place some one else has come again—Mr. Christopher Friend, splendidly tricked out, and dressed in sky-blue velvet, waits below in the green-house, and begs for a morning audience."

"So early?" asked Bona, surprised. "What can he want?"

"He inquired of me so circumstantially about your fortune," replied the gardener, "and looked withal so smart and gay, and made such little twinkling eyes, that I think in a short time you may expect proposals of marriage."

Bona smiled scornfully. After a brief consideration she replied—"He does indeed mistake, but he comes in good time. Beg of him to excuse me till I am dressed."

"Number three, in so short a period!" said the gardener smirking. "If this goes on, you'll soon draw after you the core of the Schweidnitz male population, as Punch does the children with his trumpet."

"Think you so?" rejoined Bona, with self-satisfaction.

"And yet," continued the old man, "you don't altogether understand it. You entice the birds in a masterly way, but you forget to pluck them, which yet is the principal part of the business. With the exception of the easy fool of a Spaniard, your love-affairs have brought you in marvellously little. The handsome pagan courtesans of the old time were much wiser. Though you may not exactly wish to build pyramids of the oblations of your adorers, yet a comfortable house for a refuge to your old age is in truth not to be despised."

"I hope never to be old to need it," said Bona hastily.

"But don't reckon without your host," rejoined the gardener. "The quantum of wealth from the new world, left you by Don Alonzo, has melted away confoundedly in the old world, as must naturally be the case with your passion for appearing as a rich heiress. If this is to last long, you will be forced to sell the rich jewels with which you blind the eyes of people.

What then is to become of you if you do not betimes think of some new acquisition?"

"He who follows *much* at once," replied Bona, "attains *nothing*. I follow *one* object only, but that one I follow so stedfastly, with such inflexible purpose, that I *must* gain it, and when I have gained it, I need nothing more in this world."

"And this *one?*" asked the gardener with sly importunity.

"I pay you as my servant, not as my confessor," replied Bona with angry pride, and pointed to the door.

"Good troth, a princess has been spoiled in you," muttered the old man; "but there is no helping one who will not be advised."

So saying he went. Bona laid her hand upon her forehead, and looked down gloomily in earnest meditation.

"The poison of Althea's refusal is still rankling in this Christopher," she said, after a long pause, "and the brothers are not friends. If the one were to perish through the other, that might at last reach the stony heart of Eras-

mus, and, conquered or conquer, still my victims would fall. The vindictive spirit of his adversaries is my pledge for that. Francis, think of your reckoning on the other side. The avenger of blood is already breathing within these walls."

She went up to a great mirror between the windows to arrange her hair. The sun, veiled in mist, cast a red light through the panes, and shone in wondrous way upon the fair and angry features, so that they seemed to glow with an inward fire. At the first look in the glass Bona started back in horror.

"Are the old tales of my childhood coming back upon me?" she exclaimed with fixed gaze. "It was, indeed, as if an evil spirit grinned at me from the mirror."

But by degrees she came to her recollection, and began to chide her folly with a laugh, though her lips were still quivering—"Fool, it was yourself. Revenge never beautifies a female face; that I might have well known."

And with firm step the strong-minded woman went up again to the glass, and looked in it

defyingly, as if to challenge forth the monster that was hid behind its crystal. Although her hands trembled in arranging her locks, she yet accomplished the task with her eyes stedfastly fixed upon the mirror.

"Now, then," she cried with a horrid laugh, "I am armed. Hold yourselves in readiness, my beloved! The Norna is sitting at her task, and with sharp-edged swords weaves the bloody web of the decisive combat. Up! to complete the work!"

She turned hastily to the door, which even then opened. Christopher Friend, whose tender impatience would not suffer him to remain any longer below, walked in, and with a sweet smile the beautiful fury stepped forward to meet him.

In Althea's rooms at Tausdorf, silent and anxious, expecting the return of his intended bride. Meantime, at a little table, sat Henry, looking over a large volume of copper-plates,

which, according to its title, depicted "The strange Forms of the Metamorphoses of the ingenious heathen Poet, Ovid."

"The insupportable Latin!" cried the boy, stamping with his feet; and then jumping up to Tausdorf with the folio, he said, "Pray, now, help me out of this difficulty. The stupid pictures are so singular that it makes one quite curious to learn what they mean; and when one looks after the explanation, the fool of an engraver has written Latin underneath."

"Do not find fault with the engraver," said Tausdorf; "he with justice believed that such pictures were not fit for a boy who does not yet understand Latin."

"But you told us lately that you understood it a little," persevered the boy, "so translate me the subscription. I should like to know what the mad picture means. Only look, now, there stands a stately knight in a circle of dead men's bones and strange signs, holding a goblet in his hand, and a beautiful woman touches him with a wand, and a mist spreads over the country, and the knight has already got a horrid snout,

as if he were just being changed into an abominable beast, and below is written:

In turpes abiere feras quicunque biberunt
Dulcia Circæa pocula mixtu manu.

"Pray, now, tell me what it means?"

And Tausdorf, confused, translated it: "All were turned into vile brutes who drank of the sweet cup that was mixed by the hand of Circe."

"Now I am as wise as before," rejoined the boy. "Who was this Circe? She is right handsome here in the picture; but then she looks at the poor knights with such hateful eyes that I can't bear her."

"She was a wicked enchantress of the old heathen time," said Tausdorf. "To all voyagers who visited her island, she offered a rich draught, and when they drank of it, she touched them with her magic rod, and they became beasts."

"But why did the foolish people drink of it?"

"They knew not the evil consequences," replied Tausdorf, leaning his heavy head in his hand, "or they had not done so."

"Ah! they should have been more on their guard with strange cunning women," rejoined Henry. "You certainly would not have drank of it, Herr Tausdorf!"

"Who knows, my child?" said Tausdorf, the innocent remark going to his heart: "Perhaps I might."

"Wicked witch!" cried the boy, and threatened the picture with his fist. "But did she not at last find her master?"

"Oh yes," said Tausdorf, turning over the leaf. On this Ulysses was depicted, holding his sword to the breast of the enchantress, without fear of her powerful wand, or of the devil-masks that surrounded him, grinning and menacing."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Henry; "there's a German subscription again. He read,

"Ulysses compels her to disenchant his companions."

"That's right!" he cried—"who was Ulysses?"

"A Greek hero," replied Tausdorf. "The heathen god, Mercury, had supplied him with

a herb, called *moly*, that protected him against the enchantment."

"Or he too had been metamorphosed?" asked Henry with vexation.

"No doubt," replied the knight mournfully. "He, whom God does not uphold in the hour of temptation, falls, and falls deeply."

"But it is not all really true?" added the boy, after some reflection.

"There is a good wholesome truth in the story," returned Tausdorf; "only the painter has veiled it in images. The beautiful, wicked Circe is intended to prefigure the human passions, the impulse of the senses. Whoever empties her cup, she robs him of reason, and makes him like the beasts in the wood. Recollect, Henry, how you were wrath, not long ago, with your play-fellow for some trifle, and screamed, and struck about you, and would not be satisfied,—then you had become a little wild beast in your anger."

"I will not do so again," said Henry, ashamed and kissed the knight's hand.

"But what is the meaning of the herb moly,

which protected the great hero from this enchantress?"

"It is religion," replied Tausdorf, embracing the boy in deep emotion. "If in every purpose you remember that God looks on; if you ask yourself whether it would be acceptable to him; and if in the slightest doubt of this you abandon it, then you have got the right talisman against sin."

"I will be truly good, Herr Tausdorf; I will, indeed," said the boy, and gently rested his auburn head against the knight's breast, when the sound of horses' feet was heard before the window.

"That is my mother!" he shouted, wiping away his tears, and running out of the room. Tausdorf started from his seat—"Air! the child has made me warm with his questions. It is hard to teach good to others, when one has to accuse one's self of evil. Oh Circe! Circe!"

Again he looked at the picture of Ulysses.

"With armed hand the hero broke the mighty spell which held his companions prisoners. He did his duty. Have I too done

mine? I have redeemed myself from the magic circle, but is that enough? Should I not have taken the power of evil from this woman, who seems to have come here to weave the meshes for some net of mischief, heaven only knows what? If I did not choose to denounce the creature, should I not at least have called the attention of the council to her, that no one might come to harm? Yet no. In what she has done she has only wronged myself. The ill that my denunciation might cause her would be revenge, and that does not become a man towards frail woman. Let her do as she pleases, we are all in God's hand."

"My dear friend!" exclaimed Althea, who then entered, and immediately let go of Henry's hand to fly into the arms of her intended husband. The old Schindel followed. Tausdorf hastened to welcome him with the knightly pledge, that he might not have at once to meet the look of his bride, towards whom he knew his heart was not perfectly at ease.

"Are you quite recovered?" asked Althea

affectionately; "you look pale, as if you had slept but little last night."

This innocent appeal to the past night covered poor Tausdorf with a burning blush, which, as an estimable rarity in a man of his age, gave a double charm to his features. He turned away, however, to hide the treacherous colour, and Schindel addressed his niece:

"Will it please you, niece, to give me an answer? The poor fool waits below in the corner of the street, and stays for permission to come up."

"You love to torment people, uncle. I have a deadly aversion to this family, and of all of them, the avaricious, spiteful Christopher is the most abhorrent to me."

"Shame! shame, niece! What good Christian would recollect an injury so long? Know you not from the Scriptures, that you are to forgive your brother seventy times, and again seven times seventy?"

"It is not that alone; but a secret dread possesses me whenever the creeper comes near me.

I always feel as if my evil angel stood at my side, ready to plunge me into destruction."

"Psha! Superstitious fancies, which do not become so sensible a woman. Your intended shall decide."

"Well," cried Althea; "decide, dear Tausdorf. You know that a year ago Christopher Friend solicited my hand and was rejected. Now I may add, what I before concealed; in the vexation of his disappointment, he spoke of you most unbecomingly. But he now perceives his injustice, and seeks for a reconciliation."

"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven," said Tausdorf good-naturedly.

"My own words!" cried Schindel.

"Oh, for that," said Althea impatiently, "I am as prompt as willing; but he requires a formal reconciliation, and as the seal of it would have our presence at his banquet to-morrow; this I deem as superfluous as it would be disagreeable to me."

"Who says A must say B too," retorted Schindel. "Christopher will not believe in the

sincerity of your forgiveness, and thinks that you scorn him if you refuse to appear at his banquet. You owe some compliance, besides, to his rich and powerful family, to which in addition you are allied."

"Still the untiring peacemaker and mediator! and inexhaustible in arguments, where the point is to reconcile the nobility and citizens!"

"I can't help it, niece, since, as a nobleman and a proprietor at Schweidnitz, I have become a sort of doubtful thing, and don't well know whether I am a bird or a mouse. I am compelled, therefore, to speak in the way of reconciliation on both sides, lest a feud should break out, and it should eventually fare with me as with the flittermouse in the fable. May I call up the petitioner?"

"Call him in God's name, uncle," said Tausdorf: "I read my Althea's *yes* in her lovely and peaceful countenance."

"Excellently spoken!" cried the uncle, and hurried out.

"Heaven grant that we may never repent

this *yes*," said Althea with heavy heart. "I only wish the wild Francis were not of the party!"

"Why is he so terrible to you?" asked Tausdorf, smiling.

"Because he is so rough, so fond of frays and drinking, and because he detests the nobles so irreconcilably. Since too he has been forced to submit to the long imprisonment, on account of the late unlucky affair, there is no managing with him."

"I have never seen him; but I should not like to subscribe to the damnatory sentence pronounced against him by the nobles of our acquaintance. Hot-headed men are frequently the best. As I have heard from good authority, this Francis fought bravely against the Turks, and I find it natural and pardonable that a soldier should not willingly suffer himself to be played upon. His late misfortune grieved me much. As he was absolved after all, he certainly did not belong to Bieler's murderers; and to suffer a year's undeserved imprisonment must embitter even the heart of a lamb."

"Heaven grant that you may never come in contact with this lamb; you would find in him a furious wolf. I tremble at the thoughts of it, for I think fire and water could not meet more hostilely than your dispositions. Your person would show him a true mirror of what he ought to be and is not; that would shame him, and shame exasperates vulgar minds. His roughness and your cultivation, his furious violence and your noble calmness, his inclination to every excess and your purity——"

"Still! still!" interrupted Tausdorf, ashamed, and gently pressing his hand upon the lips of the animated eulogist. "Do not forget that I also am no more than a frail man, and that exaggerated praise from an estimable mouth can corrupt even better than I am."

"Come along," cried Schindel, dragging in the sky-blue Christopher.

With a pitiful sinner-face he approached Tausdorf, and timidly stretched out his hand to him.

"All is forgotten and forgiven," cried the knight, shaking him by the hand; "only as a

first proof of friendship, do me the favour not to speak a single syllable of the past."

"You are too good, sir," replied Christopher, smiling; "but I will not fail to requite so great a favour to the best of my power."

He then went to Althea, and, kissing her hand, said—"You owe me some reparation, noble lady, for the banquet which was put off four years ago on account of that murderous history. I may, therefore, the more boldly presume that you will this time favour me with your invaluable company at a feast, which, please God, I intend giving to-morrow, at Barthel Wallach's, for my own house is just undergoing a thorough repair."

"Will your brother, Francis, be there?" asked Althea hastily.

"Heaven forbid!" rejoined Christopher; "We do not want this quarreller and roarer. I have taken good care not to invite him. At first I feared that he might intrude himself, unasked; but to my great delight I have learnt that he goes on this day to a drinking-party at Freiburg, so that we are quite safe from him.

I have asked but a small party, a few quiet nobles, and two or three honest citizens of the first class. After the cloth is taken off, we'll have a little dance amongst ourselves."

"We will come," said Althea with lightened heart.

"Excellent!" cried Christopher, rubbing his hands, while a singular piercing glance of triumph fell from his eyes upon the fair widow, who immediately changed colour. "Now I can set about the preparations for my feast with a right joyful heart. I thank my dear friends for their courtesy, and commend myself to their recollection."

He made a profound bow and departed, accompanied out by Schindel and Tausdorf; but Althea looked after them anxiously, and sighed —"Oh that I could recall my word!"

The morrow of the 27th of July was come. In Barthel Wallach's great room on the ground

floor, just before the entrance, sat Christopher Friend with his guests at the epicurean banquet, while the upper seat was graced by the betrothed pair. The first course was removed; the strong dark Hungary went unremittingly about the table in the great cups; and while the females, according to the good old custom, seemed only to kiss the goblet, the men drained it frequently till their faces glowed, and many a broad jest cast the reflection of this red upon the delicate cheeks of the ladies. Tausdorf only sat still and wrapt up in himself, and with his fork scratched letters on the pewter-dish before him.

"What ails you?" said the mild Althea sportively, and passed her white hand across his eyes. "You are not yourself, and cannot plead in excuse that your thoughts are absent with the object of your passion, for she sits by you in her honoured person, and you trouble yourself but little about her."

"My good Althea!" sighed Tausdorf, and with a mournful smile kissed the hand that caressed him.

"And what are you graving so earnestly upon the plate? I must see it, and woe betide you if it should be the name of a fortunate rival."

She bent down more closely to read what he had written.

"*Memento mori!* For God's sake, how is it that you are seized on a sudden with these death-thoughts at a pleasure-banquet?"

"It is a way of mine to think on death in the midst of enjoyment. I deem it pardonable at least, as in return one can blend with death the thought of the eternal joy that waits us in the world beyond."

"My worthy Herr von Tausdorf," interrupted Christopher with a disagreeable laugh, "I do not doubt your oratorical powers, or your piety, and am convinced that you could, if you pleased, make an excellent funeral sermon extempore; but that would be too dull an entertainment with the full goblet: therefore take up the glass before you, and pledge me as fairly as I pledge you to the health of your noble bride."

Tausdorf seized the goblet, but again lost himself in a sea of thought, and forgot to pledge.

"Well, dreamer," said the intended bride with good-humoured reproach, "do you hesitate to drink the health of your Althea?"

He raised the cup mechanically, drank, and set it down again. Schindel, who sat near him, was surprised.

"What is the matter with you, Tausdorf? I never saw you thus before?"

"I do not comprehend myself. An anxiety has possessed me, as if I were to commit a murder. It must have been so that the poor king, Saul, felt when the evil spirit was upon him. I am ashamed of this childish feeling, and yet I can so little master it, that I shudder every time the door opens, thinking that some great misfortune must enter under a dreadful form."

"All this comes only of thick blood," replied Schindel; "you must be bled."

As he spoke the word, the door was flung open, and Francis Friend burst into the room with his usual impetuosity.

"Ah, woe!" cried Althea.

Schindel clasped his hands in terror, while

Christopher asked piteously, "Why, whence do you come, brother? I thought you were long ago at Freiburg, and enjoying yourself?"

"He is a fool," replied Francis, "who hunts after pleasure miles off, when he knows where to find it at once. I heard yesterday of your present feasting, upon which I thought directly of surprising you, and put off mine."

"Well, all that's true," said Christopher; "you have surprised us all, and most agreeably: so let us draw together. Set yourself here at my right hand, and enjoy with us the meat and drink that God has sent us."

"Spare all this idle talk," cried Francis, "I'll find out a good place for myself;" and he carried his chair to the upper part of the room, seating himself between Tausdorf and Schindel, and saying to the former, "I see by your place near my cousin that you are the knight Tausdorf. I'm glad to have an opportunity of knowing you, for though I do not in general care much about the nobles, you please me well. There is a command and intelligence about you such as one does not usually see in

your knights. For the rest, I am the wild Frank Friend, of whom no doubt you have heard all manner of stories, and more bad than good. In troth, I am a mad companion, but I mean it fairly with him who means it fairly with me, and I now heartily wish you joy of your marriage with my handsome cousin Althea here."

Tausdorf returned a fitting compliment, while Schindel, who had got behind Althea's chair, whispered to her, "The bear does not seem in one of his worst bear-moods to-day. Heaven help us farther."

In the mean time the second course was served up. Francis ate little, but stuck so much the more diligently to the wine, and kept up a constant talk with Tausdorf, in a tone of frank importunity, which did not sit amiss upon him. Soon the conversation turned upon the Turkish war; and he was ready to leap out of his skin for joy on finding that Tausdorf had served against the infidels in Transylvania, at the very time he had been fighting with them in Hungary.

"Heaven confound me!" he cried, while his face glowed with drinking; and holding up the goblet—"Why, you please me better and better, comrade, and therefore we 'll now pledge each other in a brave draught, and swear eternal friendship and brotherhood."

Tausdorf hesitated at this unexpected proposal, and was about to decline it courteously, when Althea pressed his hand under the table, and in low brief words requested him to accede for her sake; upon which he took up the crystal goblet, and Francis did the same to pledge him; but in the moment that the glasses touched, both rang hollowly, and burst with a sharp jarring sound, which echoed lamentably through the wide hall, while the noble wine poured down in streams upon the floor, to the indignation of the avaricious Christopher, who called out, "You are, and always will be, Frank the clumsy, and do nothing like rational people; all with noise and fury. You have broken now my beautiful crystal cups with your rough pledging."

"Yes, every thing is to be laid to me,"

growled Francis: "I pledged my goblet as neatly as possible; it was not till afterwards that both broke, and how that chanced, the devil only knows."

"It is not your brother's fault," said Tausdorf, drying the wine from his doublet. "I do not myself understand how it happened."

"We have examples," observed Schindel thoughtfully, "that empty glasses have broken upon people calling out loudly in the same key to which they were tuned; but these goblets were full, and all was still in the room. God grant that this accident may not prognosticate the rupture of your new-formed friendship as early as the glasses!"

"No fear of rupture," cried Francis, shaking Tausdorf's hand cordially. "We must both agree to that first, but our hearts have been amalgamated and hardened together in the same war-fire, and will hold together for life and death."

"Gentlemen," said the butler, entering with a respectful bow, "there are some well-dressed personages—masks,—standing with-

out, before the door, who would ask of the honourable company through me whether they may come in to amuse you with song and dance, and other allowable pleasantries."

"They are welcome," cried the restless Francis, starting up. "This tedious sitting at table has long been abominable to me."

He ran to the door and opened it. Three gipsies danced in, playing with pipe, triangle, and tambourine: these were followed by three females in black clothes, slashed with red, and wearing black masks.

"Trim wenches, brother," said Francis, with eager look, to Tausdorf, upon whose chair he was leaning. "So slim, and at the same time so full! By heavens! it makes one wish to become a gipsy for the pleasure of possessing them."

"This masking is not to my taste," replied Tausdorf. "The burning eyes that sparkle from the fixed black faces have to me something almost supernatural. The open brow, and an open heart whether in joy or grief, are what I love."

"I understand you, my poor knight," said Francis mockingly. "You are already in the cage, and dare no longer take any pleasure in a handsome face, at least not *show* it, lest your lady wife should be angry, and hold a criminal court upon her faithless shepherd."

"Do you know any of the party?" asked Althea, to interrupt this conversation.

"Not I," answered Francis. "The devil knows where stupid Kit has picked up the handsome wenches; but my acquaintance with them shall soon be made, and then I'll let you know more about them."

With this he would have forced himself upon the masks, but the gipsy with the triangle, an old gray-beard, waved him back, and gave the women a sign to begin their revels. The music immediately struck up, and the three gipsies commenced a wild fantastic dance, in which the twines of their round well-formed arms, the turnings and bendings of their slim, delicate figures, the springing and agility of their feet, were shown off in full perfection. One of them, whose auburn hair was adorned with coloured

ribbons and Bohemian stones, particularly distinguished herself by the gracefulness of her movements; and Francis, after having looked on for some time, tore open his doublet, exclaiming, "Zounds! what a figure! It warms an honest fellow who has got a few bottles of Tokay in him."

"This mad springing may please you," said Althea contemptuously; "it is just calculated for the taste of a drunkard; but to me it seems like the wild dance of fiends about a lost soul. It grates me to see that a woman can so far forget the female dignity as to expose herself thus."

"Heaven deliver me from a tribunal where you preside," said Francis laughing; "why, it must be worse than that of the emperor at Prague. Your virtue is of so fierce a nature, there's no reasoning with it. That which is to please must be a little free: your decorum and modesty are the most tedious things on the face of the earth."

The trio was at an end. The gipsies fanned themselves with their motley-coloured handker-

chiefs, but they would not move their masks, and on that account rejected the wine which was proffered to them by the master of the feast.

"These girls seem to be buttoned up to their chins," said Francis, "but for all that I'll have a peep behind their black masks, or die for it. Above all, I must try the fair-haired witch." And in the delirium of the moment, he dashed his goblet through the window, and leaped upon a chair, shouting "Huzza! huzza! away with the tables; we have had enough of eating, and will dance you one till the floor shakes, and the rafters crack again."

"Man! are you alone here?" exclaimed Tausdorf indignantly; but in his frenzy, Francis heard him not, and, springing from the chair over the table with a neck-breaking leap, alighted again just before the mask with the auburn hair.

"Take away," said Christopher with vexation. "When once he breaks out, there is no managing with him."

The tables were removed, the seats placed close to the walls, and the guests made room

for the dancers. Passing over the usual forms of courtesy, Francis seized his chosen one with a rude grasp, and shouted to the musicians, "A waltz! a waltz! but quick! quick!"

The music began, and the feet of the dancers kept pace with its rapidity. The space about them grew wider and wider, for the spectators could hardly get their feet out of the way in time from the stamping of the intoxicated Francis, who kept clapping his hands, and shouting, "Faster! faster! I can stand it, and so can she." At last the piper stopped from want of breath; in a little time too the triangle was unable to follow; and now only the tambourine gave a fit measure to this bacchanalian revel.

"And this is called pleasure?" said Althea to Tausdorf, who had retreated to a bow-window.

"Where the soul is incapable of enjoyment," he replied, "pleasure must be sensual, or the vulgar mind would have no joy on earth whatever."

At last the sprightly bacchanal was exhausted, and danced off with his female into the

next room. There he threw himself into a chair, forced his companion into the seat beside him, and panted out, "You dance as gracefully as lightly, and only so much the more stimulate my desire to see your face. It certainly won't have to be ashamed of the feet. Come, take off the damnable Moor's visor."

"It is not yet time," replied the gipsy in a low tone, that sounded still more hollowly from the mask.

"Not yet?" said Francis, with a rough grasp of her hand; "but soon? to-day?"

"If all goes as it should, perhaps," was the answer.

"Then I must have patience, however little I am used to it; so let us, in the mean time, have a friendly chat together. You are so sparing of words. I only wish your tongue had half the nimbleness of your feet."

"I am not fond of talking," replied the gipsy with cutting coldness; "there is little pleasure in it."

"And yet you are a woman," cried Francis, merrily. "For Heaven's sake, how could you

have so degenerated? Only think, if every one were to be as you are, what a poor sort of entertainment we should have in the world."

"The world would gain by it," retorted the mask. "How much foolish, how much evil, talk would be spared! How much falsehood and deceit! How much perjury!"

"Oh, this is dull gossip," exclaimed Francis, struck by her words. "Rather tell me my fortune; you have visited us as a gipsy, and should keep up the character."

"Do not ask it," she replied, in a warning tone: "you might hear something that would not please you."

"Yes, if I were fool enough to believe such nonsense. Prophesy away, and be it at my peril. Here is my hand."

The gipsy hastily seized it. Her bosom heaved violently, and her eyes darted piercing looks from out the mask.—At length she said, "These lines do not please me; you are like to use your sword this very day."

"That would be the devil," cried Francis; and looked about with an air of defiance, as if

seeking for his adversary.—"But I have no objection: to my mind the best of a feast is wanting if there is not something of a row to wind it up."

"So much for the future," said the gipsy, releasing his hand. "The past you will be contented to leave alone."

"By no means," exclaimed Francis. "Of the future you can lie as much as you please, because no one can peep behind the curtain; but in the past your art is put to the proof of fire, and if it does not come well out of it, I shall mock you soundly."

Again the gipsy took his hand, examined it, but shuddered and retreated, saying, "For the last time I warn you."

"That, by my troth, sounds like earnest," cried Francis, mockingly.—"But go on, at my peril."

"You have murder on your soul!" said a voice hollowly from beneath the mask.

Francis drew back, shuddering, but in the next moment he collected himself, as he replied, "In the Turkish war I helped more than one

infidel to hell; but I pride myself upon it, and do not reckon it for a murder."

"I speak of that which happened four years since, and of which you were acquitted at the royal tribune of Prague."

Francis uttered a cry of terror, and would have started up, but the gipsy grasped his hand firmly, and he sank back upon his seat as if paralysed.

"Properly speaking," continued the gipsy, "you have two souls to answer for above. An honest old man was sacrificed for your safety. You deceived him by an oath to marry his daughter, whom you had seduced: justice gave way before the son of the all-powerful patrician, and, to save vice, innocence went out to die."

Francis sate pale and motionless. The fumes of the wine were for a short time dissipated by strong horror; and, though he saw that nothing would do here save bold denial either in wrath or ridicule, yet he was not sufficiently master of his tongue; and the moment in which impudence would have been in place passed by

unemployed. The music from the next room sounded merrily, as if in mockery of his anguish. At length he stammered out with difficulty, "Avenging Nemesis, who are you?"

"You may, perhaps, learn to-day," replied the gipsy, "as I have already given you to hope. But that you may not send me to the stake for a witch," she added, passing over to a tone of jest, "I must confess that I had my information from a sure hand. The stately knight yonder, who is conversing so familiarly at the window with that handsome lady, told the strange tale a little time ago to a noble Hungarian. I listened to him unseen, and heard him calling you a pitiful boy, who did not know when death became a man more than life."

With the passion thus excited, returned intoxication also in the wild brain of Francis. His face became a dark red. He started from his seat, and snatching up his sword from the corner, girded it on with trembling hands, as he exclaimed, "For the first time I have trusted a noble, but never again.—And the scoundrel caught me so with his knightly bear-

ing and open manners, was so frank and friendly with me, and yet attacked my honour behind my back like a hired murderer!—Perhaps at the very moment he drank to our brotherhood, he was plotting to rake up old forgotten stories from their oblivion, that he might capitally denounce me to the furious emperor, with whom he has so much weight. Now it is clear why the goblets broke in pledging. But, by the infernal hosts, I will do myself right upon this hypocrite!"

"You will do well," said the gipsy, still firmly grasping his hand; "but if it imports you to accomplish your revenge, don't begin the feud here. All would take part against you, and he would be warned. Entice him out, and then let your swords decide in the battle-ordeal."

"That is hard," exclaimed Francis; "hard that I am to speak the scoundrel fair, when I should like to fall upon him at once, tooth and nail. But you are right. I am called the wild Frank, and, as I should not dare to tell the real cause, I should be thought by every one

in the wrong. I'll look out, therefore, for a quiet spot where I may right myself without any interruption or disturbance. But where shall I find you afterwards to thank you for your information?"

"When all is done, you will see me again, unmasked," replied the gipsy with peculiar emphasis. "My word upon it! I shall keep that word better than many a man his oath!"

"You are a strange being," cried Francis, struck by the word as if by a secret blow from a dagger. For several moments he stared at her fixedly and thoughtfully with large and drunken eyes, and then stammered, "I don't altogether know what to make of you. Sometimes you appear so familiar to me that my hair stands on end; at others, you sit by me like my evil conscience, and torture me at your own good-will. Again, you seem to be a sort of fiend, who would tempt me to some sin, and then laugh me to scorn when I had done your pleasure. If I had not so much Tokay in my brain, I should be able to unravel all this, and find out upon what footing we were. But that won't do

now, and so let my first resolution abide, in the devil's name! Chalk your soles well, Tausdorf; I fetch you to a merry dance of death."

He hurried back into the ball-room.

"I am almost sorry that I must hound on this beast against the noble Tausdorf; but no choice was left me. He may defend himself. On one side blind wrath and drunkenness; on the other, sober courage. It cannot fail. Good night, Francis!"

In the meanwhile Althea and Tausdorf were gliding round in the graceful * German dance, and about them stood the guests, looking with delight on the pair that seemed to be made for each other. Christopher, indeed, eyed them maliciously, and at times cast a troubled glance at the side-chamber. At last Francis came

* This German dance is the Waltz, though it certainly has no claim to the title, being neither more nor less than the English Lavolta, so constantly referred to by the old dramatists. But our German neighbours are remarkable for the organ of appropriation, and not less so for the organ of impudence. The one leads them to steal, and the other to deny or abuse articles stolen. There is a very pretty instance of this in Kotzebue, who cut down the comedy of the Jealous Wife into a farce, and protested that the other three acts were good for nothing.

out, death in his looks: his worthy brother immediately beckoned to him, and proffered a full goblet, which he seized and hastily swallowed.

"I have drunk this glass to the devil's brotherhood!" he whispered to Christopher, and then mixed amongst the spectators.

Schindel, who had overheard him, exclaimed to Christopher, "What means the libertine by those impious words?"

"The heathen god, Bacchus, can best tell that," replied Christopher, while with a quiet laugh he filled the goblet again. "To explain what a drunkard means one must be drunk one's self, and I, thank God, have kept myself sober, to be able to see that all goes on right."

"That last glass was one too much," said Schindel reproachfully. "You should not have given him any thing more to drink. If now he should do any mischief in his drunkenness?"

"I know my brother better. When he is half drunk, he is always ready to quarrel; but with a full lading he soon grows sleepy, and one gets a respite from him. I gave him the glass purposely as a sleeping draught."

"I have no faith in your expedient," said Schindel, looking for his cap; "and, as the sun is setting, you must allow me to take my leave."

"Not yet, not yet, cousin," entreated Christopher, trying to persuade the old knight to sit down again. "I'll not let you go till we have emptied this flask of Tokay to the bottom."

"I must put it off till another time: your brother's face does not please me again to-day, and *better prevented than lamented.* Do you see and get him to bed."

During this, the betrothed pair had finished their dance, and, observing Schindel's farewell, took it for a signal to follow, and bade adieu to their host accordingly. Francis came up to them: "What means this breaking-up, old man? It is bad enough that you leave us so early, but it would be a downright wrong to rob us of such sprightly dancers."

"We must, indeed, go," anxiously insisted Althea, perceiving the state of Francis. "I have a messenger to send to-day to our steward at Bogendorf, and it is on business that admits of no delay."

"Well, if you go, the best of the pleasure goes," said Francis gallantly. "I had rather not stay either, and will pay an hour's visit to the bowling-green: they bowl there to-day for a bacon-hog. Come with me, brother Tausdorf; it is still far from evening, and *you* have not got a messenger to send to Bögendorf."

"I am no player," said the knight, excusing himself.

"Nor I, brother," replied Francis, and took Tausdorf's arm familiarly in his; "at least I don't love this push-pin work. It is another thing when one can stake life and limb upon the hazard; then, indeed, I am for you. But we'll not bowl, only look on and see how the poor devils fag themselves for a paltry stake. Come along."

"Do as he wishes, to avoid strife," whispered Althea; "but get away from him as soon as you can."

"So be it then," said Tausdorf to Francis, and shook hands with Althea. In the mean time, Schindel had taken his leave of the other guests, and now first perceived what was going on. Alarmed, he drew Tausdorf to the win-

dow:—"You are not going to walk with Francis?"

"Why not?" replied the knight calmly: "He has asked me in a friendly manner, and Althea, too, wishes it."

"For God's sake don't get too familiar with the drunkard; above all, go not with him alone. He has no good intentions to-day."

"You carry your foresight too far, dear uncle," returned Tausdorf, girding on his sword; "Francis is an honest soldier, and, I can plainly see, well inclined to me. It is impossible he should have any design against me. Besides, I have already promised him my company, and therefore it must be so at all events."

"I have spoken and discharged my conscience," cried Schindel. "God avert all accidents!"

"Come then, brother, come," urged Francis, pulling the knight's arm.

"Adieu, dear Althea," said Tausdorf, and again shook the hand of his intended bride, who looked at him with a loving farewell. On a sudden the tears burst from her eyes, and, for-

getful of those about them, she fell upon his neck.

"Farewell!" she cried, with stifled voice:—"God grant that I may see you again!"

"Without doubt before evening," said Francis laughing, and hurried out his companion.

"I don't like his going," observed Schindel, as he took his niece's arm and led her away.

"They are gone then!" said Christopher to himself: "As for the rest, that will come in time too."

Tausdorf and Francis went out together towards the Peter's-thor, the city gate, followed at a distance by Martin Heubert, Tausdorf's boy, and his page, Schmidt, who had waited for their master at the door of the banqueting-house. In the heart of Francis fermented the poison which the gipsy had poured into it, but he still restrained his wrath, and walked in silence by the side of Tausdorf. In this way they came to the Park, between the two gates—the Peter's-thor and Nieder-thor, —in the way to the bowling-green, when Taus-

dorf, tired of the silent walk, and with the view of showing a friendly sympathy with Francis, said to him, "You are a soldier like myself, Frank; you too, therefore, must have found that the pains and dangers of a campaign are often less than the evils with which life threatens us in the profoundest peace. As I hear, you have gone through much misfortune, and at last come off triumphantly!"

These well intended, but unlucky, words made the crater overflow. The drunken Francis, prepared as he was by an evil hand, could see nothing in them but the bitterest scorn, and became mad with wrath. For a while he was silent, because he did not know with what language to hurl his contempt and rage in the face of his adversary. At last he thundered out, "Yes, indeed! And, as they tell me, you have so acted that an honest man cannot drink out of the same cup with you."

Surprised by this insult, which came upon him like a lightning flash from a clear sky, Tausdorf started back. With an awful sternness he asked, "How could you drink to our

eternal friendship but a few hours since, if you knew this of me? In truth, you must be worse than I am in your opinion. But now you will say who it is that has spread this slander against me?"

"I had it from a good friend," retorted Francis defyingly.

"You will name him to me this very hour, and on this very spot!" cried Tausdorf, with flashing eyes.

The drunkard gazed on the knight, who stood before him like an angry Mars; and it seemed to him for a moment in his intoxication as if he had gone too far.

"I will tell you at a fitter time," he stammered out: "I have it from a woman."

The contradiction between this and the earlier statement enraged Tausdorf still more.

"Do not stir!" he called out to his people, and led Francis impetuously a few steps farther.

"Now, name the slanderer!"

Instead of reply Francis grasped at him, but with gigantic strength the latter caught his opponent by the breast and flung him to the ground, where he held him fast.

"If you are an honourable nobleman," groaned Francis under him, "let me betake myself to my sword."

Tausdorf hastily let him loose, and went back a few paces. The latter sprang up, frantic with rage, and tore his sword from the scabbard; and, looking after the knight's people furiously, cried out, "Don't let your servants help!"

Tausdorf called to them in Bohemian, "Whichever of you moves a hand, my sword strikes him!"

"Draw!" roared Francis, with foaming mouth.

"Only in self-defence," said Tausdorf, and held out his blade.

Francis pressed upon him with furious blows. He merely defended himself. During this the auburn-haired gipsy looked over the wall of the garden; she was now without a mask, and her face betrayed agony and repentance.

"Why don't you part them?" she cried to Tausdorf's people, wringing her hands.

"It is forbidden to us," replied the faithful Martin sadly.

Tausdorf cast a glance from the combat to the place whence the well-known voice came;

and, taking advantage of this, Francis lunged fiercely at his heart, but the thrust did not succeed.

"My life, then, is intended?" cried Tausdorf indignantly, and he cut his adversary over the right hand. As the arm sank, his sword went into the breast of Francis, who fell to earth.

"Gracious Heavens! such was not my purpose," exclaimed Tausdorf, when he saw the blood flowing; and, sheathing his sword, he gazed for a while with looks of compassion on his fallen adversary. Then turning to his servant, he bade him hasten for his carriage:—"I feel myself too weak for long and speedy riding, and this brooks no delay."

Heubert and Schmidt hurried back to the town.

"By God's holy word it was not my purpose!" repeated Tausdorf; and sighing "Poor Althea!" he followed his people.

While this was passing, the gipsy had quitted the wall, opened a little gate in it, and approached Francis, who lay in death-throes on the ground. Having come up to him, she shook

the auburn locks from her head, and the long brown hair fell about her face as she put on a withered coronet of roses.

"Do you know me, Francis? Do you know this bridal ornament?" she asked, with a mixture of grief and anger.

"Agatha!" sighed Francis; and with difficulty turned away his head, that he might not see the fearful apparition.

"I have revenged your crime," she exclaimed, "and by a greater crime. But there is no joy in vengeance; the grave knows no hatred, and I forgive you. Your guilt is atoned; and you may appear confidently before the throne of Heaven. Pray for me yonder, that I too may be forgiven when I have ended here in penitence and agony!"

She rushed away. Again he sighed!—Again!—and his soul fleeted with the last beams of the setting sun, and darkness and the silence of eve were upon the blood-besprinkled earth.

Althea was reclining in the window and impatiently expecting the knight's return, when at length she saw Martin and Schmidt come running breathlessly through the Peter's-gate. An evil foreboding thrilled through her bosom. She called out to them,—"What now? Has any accident happened?"

"We are to fetch our master's carriage immediately," replied Heubert; "you will learn the rest by and by."

"Gracious Heavens! What is the meaning of this?" she exclaimed, and leaning out of the window to look after Tausdorf, she saw him coming, pale and in disorder.

"Something dreadful has occurred—I have never seen him thus before."

She hurried down, but Tausdorf was already at the street door, and, seizing his hand with increasing anxiety, she said,—"Dear friend, what has happened to you?"

"My poor Althea! You were right with your foreboding when we parted. Such as I left you I never shall see you again, for then no murder was upon my soul!"

"Good Heavens! Francis Friend!" cried Althea, whose terror divined the truth at once.

"He lies in the Park, killed by my sword!"

"You are lost, then, if you do not instantly fly from Schweidnitz. You should not have returned, for moments here are of more worth than gold."

"My people are putting to the horses," replied Tausdorf, and went with Althea into the court, where Schmidt was just drawing out the carriage from the coach-house, and Martin was cursing in the stable because he could not find the harness.

"This is too long about," said Althea; "besides you will go more slowly in your carriage, and not be able to use the footpaths. Let them saddle my palfrey for you."

"The creature is good, but too slight. He'll not stand out a hard ride."

"Let him, then, drop under you, so as you but reach your goal. Only hasten, for Heaven's sake, before the deed is spread abroad!"

"Then saddle the palfrey," said Tausdorf to his servant; "and lead him on before to the

Striegauer gate. I will come straight after you."

The servant obeyed.

"But how was it possible," said Althea, "that with all your coolness and moderation, you could suffer yourself to be provoked by the wretched drunkard to this rash act, the consequences of which are so evident?"

"Woman," replied Tausdorf, with gloomy looks, "were an angel from heaven to come down in a corporeal form, he could not remain in peace if the evil-minded seriously set about involving him in quarrels! Believe me on my knightly word, I was forced to draw the sword. My life and honour were both at stake; and if I am no longer to defend these with my knightly hand, I may bid adieu to the world, and creep into a cloister. The thrust did, indeed, go deeper than it should, but who, in the heat of battle, can command his steel? God be my judge!"

The palfrey was saddled and brought out. Tausdorf again bade Althea farewell, pressed her to his heart with the convulsive energy of

grief, and rushed away. With slow steps she reascended the stairs, and placed herself again in the stone seat in the window. The tears flowed hotly down her cheeks, while her anxious heart swelled her bosom with strong and frequent heavings.

She had sate thus for some time, when with anxious speed her uncle entered the apartment.

"Have you heard it, niece? Francis Friend has been found dead in the Park, not far from the bowling-green, and report names our Tausdorf for his murderer."

"Alas! alas!" sobbed Althea; "this misfortune will cost me too my life."

"Gracious Heavens! It is true, then? But the unlucky man has fled?—for, if they catch him here, he is lost. He might rather hope to find mercy from the Spanish inquisition, or from the prince of darkness himself, than from the old Erasmus."

"He has fled upon my palfrey, and if he only gets a good start of them I deem him saved."

"God grant it! but as I hurried hither the prefects of the quarter were running about like

mad. To a certainty they will raise a hue and cry after him. Has he been long gone?"

Althea remained without answering, for the hurried trot of many horses had caused her to look out of the window. A party of the city police were riding by, well armed and with speed, over the market-place to the Striegauer gate.

"Gracious Heavens! Too soon!" sighed the poor Althea, and sank in a swoon to the ground.

The night had come on, and the moon threw her first beams over the silent country. Tausdorf just then rode his panting horse into Salzbrunn, with many a glance behind to see if he could yet discover any of his pursuers. Unfortunately he heard from the town the snorting and the tramp of many horses.

"Hold out but this once, poor beast!" he exclaimed to his horse, and again plunged the spurs into his bleeding flanks. But the weary animal made only a few weak efforts, and fell

back again into his short trot, interrupted by frequent stumbles, while the sound of horses' feet kept constantly nearing.

"It is then a struggle for life or death!" cried Tausdorf; drew his sword, and his left hand grasped his holster-pistols.

"Stop, murderer, stop!" cried the first horseman, springing forward. "You are our prisoner. Follow us to Schweidnitz."

"Keep yourselves out of harm's way, good people," cried Tausdorf, turning round his horse: "I am well armed, and have nothing to do with you."

"You have slain the son of our burgomaster, and are therefore forfeited to our criminal law," retorted two of the marshalmen, waving their swords, while the others came up and surrounded the knight.

"Surrender!" exclaimed the chief of them, "that we may not have to use force, by which you are sure to come off worst."

"Not alive!" cried Tausdorf. "I am here in the Fürstentein territory, and to the Fürstentein tribunal will I surrender myself, that

the *Oberlandeshauptmann* may try me for my deed. To the sentence of the court of Schweidnitz I never will submit."

"By no means," replied the marshal. "Where you have committed the crime, there must you be judged. Therefore, yield yourself immediately, or I 'll have you rode down, and the damage is your own."

In the meantime the tumult, the cry of murder, and the loud parley, had brought the peasants of Saltzbrunn thither. They came with poles and spears, and stared at the parties, whom they surrounded.

" Help us to seize the murderer!" cried the marshalman, who had but little inclination to venture on the single man with his whole troop.

" Not at all," replied the village magistrate. " You are here, gentlemen, upon the imperial fief of Saltzbrunn; and, as I understand, the knight is willing to give himself up to our tribunal. That is law, and so it must be. In the meantime I answer for the prisoner till I have informed our gracious mistress, the Lady

of Hochberg, and afterwards right will be done to all parties."

"That I should have to dispute thus with a village magistrate about obeying the commands of the council at Schweidnitz!" exclaimed the marshal indignantly. "Peasants, I again warn you to help us seize the murderer, as good and true neighbours. You expose yourselves to a heavy responsibility if he escapes us through your fault; while, on the contrary, I promise you a rich reward for your services from the noble council."

"Here's an opportunity of gaining something," whispered one peasant to the other; and soon the whole party cried out in chorus, with lifted poles, "Surrender yourself, Sir knight."

"For God's sake, do not compel me to murder!" said Tausdorf earnestly, and waved his sword.

"Forwards!" commanded the marshal, and rushed with his horsemen upon Tausdorf; who instantly fired his pistol, but the ball only struck one of the horses. The knight now used his

sword gallantly, but his enemies were too powerful, and his steed was too much exhausted for him to wheel about amongst them with the skill and tricks of horsemanship. During this, too, the peasants had come on with courage, and struck at him from a distance with their long poles. The opposition of the honest magistrate was lost, amidst this murderous uproar. At last a pole struck Tausdorf's head: he fell senseless from his horse, and the crowd rushed upon him with rude shouts of scorn and laughter. Bound with disgraceful bonds, they set him upon a horse, and the police returned in triumph with him to Schweidnitz.

In the hour of midnight the council was collected in the senate-house at Schweidnitz. The two tall candles which stood on the table lighted the high and gloomy Sessions'-room but sparingly. The council had collected in single groups, and conversed in low and troubled

whispers. Alone, and with his hands behind his back, as was his custom, paced Erasmus, up and down, slow and silent; but on his old and venerable face the storm of the most violent passions was throwing up its waves.

"Tausdorf is just brought in and placed in the Hildebrand," announced the Marshal Clement Kernichen.

"God be praised!" said Erasmus, with a dreadful look towards heaven, and went to his seat.

"*Ad loca*, gentlemen!" he exclaimed to the counsellors; and when they had taken their places, he said with proud dignity, "The murderer is in our power; it is time, then, for us to do our duty. Let double watches be placed at the door. These will remain closed against every one till justice is satisfied. At the break of day the judges shall hold a criminal court; and as the murdered person was my son, Doctor Jacob Grenwitz will preside in my place. I do not conceal from you, colleagues, that the criminal has a strong party here, and that all the nobles will be on his side. Therefore,

that justice may have its course, unchecked of human fears, I herewith declare the town in danger, and the council permanent. The horse-police shall be collectively summoned, and mount guard before the Sessions'-house completely armed; the gens d'armes shall be at their alarm-posts; the various guilds be warned to hold themselves in readiness with their weapons, that they may come forward at the first sound of the alarm-bell. Put all this into execution immediately, Mr. Marshalman, and then return to our sessions to report progress and receive our farther orders."

"God deliver us! how will all this end?" sighed Kernichen, and left the room; in which a deadly silence prevailed, as each of the council was sufficiently occupied with his own thoughts, and yet hesitated to impart them to another. In the midst of this the city-serjeant, Rudolph, announced Doctor Heidenreich, who wished to speak in private with the burgomaster.

"In the little room by the judges' chamber," said Erasmus, whither he went himself. The doctor was already waiting for him, and by his

dress it might be seen that he had just jumped out of bed, and flung them on in a hurry.

"Let my hurry excuse the carelessness of my attire, Mr. Burgomaster; necessity knows no law. A report runs through the town, that Tausdorf has been seized at Saltzbrunn by your servants, and now lies a prisoner in the Hildebrand."

"Such is the truth," replied Erasmus calmly.

"That is a great misfortune for the town," sighed Heidenreich.

"Are you out of your senses? If you have nothing more rational to bring forward, you had better have remained in bed and slept off your wonderful dreams."

"Mr. Burgomaster!" cried Heidenreich firmly, and seized the old man's hand; "you know me for an honest citizen of this town, and a true friend to your family. The last, in particular, I should think I proved to you not very long ago. I, therefore, of all others, may well speak out to you boldly and plainly; and now entreat you, by the ancient honour of your office, do not this time give way to your love of

vengeance, however alluring may seem the opportunity."

"What are you dreaming of?" cried Erasmus, tearing away his hand from him. "Do I intend sitting in judgment myself on the murderer of my own son? Doctor Grenwitz will preside, in my place, over the criminal tribunal."

"—Through whose mouth he will only echo your sentence! I must pray you to take off the mask before so old and faithful an acquaintance. You wish to destroy Tausdorf. That you have more than one reason for wishing it is plain to me; that in so doing you will preserve the forms of law is no more than I expect from your prudence; but you are wrong in the main point. The criminal jurisdiction over this man does not belong to the town."

"How! Does not the emperor Wenceslaus' charter of 1384 give us full authority and power to seek, take, judge and execute, with imperial privilege, all offenders, when and in whatever place they may be found, and for whatever offences?"

"The charter applies to thieves and robbers that may be apprehended within your jurisdiction. You cannot apply it to a nobleman and officer of his imperial majesty, whom you have arrested, contrary to all right, in the Fürstentein territory, and against the decree of king Wladislaus and the Convention of forty-five."

"Tausdorf is a vagabond Bohemian and adventurer, with whom there is no occasion for using much ceremony."

"By no means, Mr. Burgomaster; I have inquired narrowly into the matter. He is a native Silesian vassal. The father was possessed and settled in the hereditary principality, and the son is about to purchase an estate in Bögendorf. This affair comes under the jurisdiction of the prince palatine."

"—That he may again do us such excellent justice as in the case of Bieler's murder?—or as in those violent assaults which the nobles, since that time, have indulged in against the citizens? No; once I have given way to the

arrogance of the priest, but never again so long as I am burgomaster in Schweidnitz."

"If, then, you could hope to obtain strict justice from the lord bishop, you would leave the farther proceedings to him?"

Erasmus was about to answer at once, but again bethought himself, and said wrathfully, "You are an old fox, with whom one must not use too many words, lest you should turn them into snares. It does not become a counsellor to talk of what he would do if things stood otherwise. Enough if we know what we have to do '*rebus sic stantibus*.' We owe an account of our proceedings only to the emperor, next under God; and we will account for them when it is demanded of us, either on earth, or before the Eternal judgment-seat."

"You have spoken a word of deep import, Mr. Burgomaster: God grant that you may be able one day to stand by it. I would only once again impress this upon you; Tausdorf is universally beloved; all will take part with him and against you; and if you were as right in your

proceeding, as, by Heavens! you are wrong, you would still plunge this town into unutterable grief and ruin."

"*Fiat justitia et pereat mundus!*" cried the burgomaster, and left him.

The first gray of morning contended strangely with the yellow light of the candles in the room wherein the judges had assembled to hold a criminal court. The city serjeant was just leading out Martin Heubert, Tausdorf's boy, whom they had been interrogating, and the town-advocate, Kernicher, entered with Melchior Lange and Paul Reimann, who had been viewing the wounds of the body. The advocate laid before the chief-judge, in silence, the book in which was entered the result of his inquiry. Behind him came Tausdorf in chains, surrounded by gens-d'armes; his face was pale, and his clothes soiled and torn by the violence at Saltzbrunn, but still he bore himself with knightly dignity. The procurator arose and

lifted up the accusation of blood against him; and he was summoned once—and again twice —after the ancient custom. Upon this the examination began, and Tausdorf related the unfortunate affair frankly and honestly as it had really happened.

"Francis Friend," he said in conclusion, "enticed me to the place where the misfortune occurred, reviled me, and at last fell upon me with his naked sword. Hereupon I defended myself as a soldier, to save my honour, my body, my life,—and that which then happened I was forced to do. I understand not the law, and therefore be not precipitate, but allow me an advocate to conduct my cause: I will reward him richly."

The chief judge rang his bell. "The procurator, Hans Reimann!" he exclaimed to the serjeant who answered the summons. The latter went out, and the procurator appeared.

"We have given you to the accused as his defender," said the judge. "Consult with him."

"Your pardon, gentlemen," replied the pro-

curator; "I have no inclination for the task. Francis Friend was always on a good footing with me: and besides, I should not like to plead for a manifest assassin."

"The council will be hardly satisfied with this. Such defence belongs to your office, and you cannot refuse it without giving up the office itself. But come with me to the gentlemen of the council; you may have their answer from themselves."

He went away with the procurator. The silence of expectation prevailed through the room. Tausdorf went to the window, leaned upon the breast-work, and, gazing upon the dark gray clouds, which had already received golden edges from the rising sun, he sighed "Althea!"

At last the two returned.

"You submit, then?" said the judge to the procurator, as they retired.

"What one must, one must!" replied the procurator.

Tausdorf went up to him, and said with

friendly dignity, " I pray you, sir, conduct my defence truly; I do not understand this matter, and will reward your labour. If the business were the ordering of a battle, I should know better what I was about."

" Say on, then," replied the procurator, gaping: " how am I to defend you?"

" In God's name!" cried Tausdorf angrily, " how should I, who have been devoted to arms from my youth, teach you what you are to say for me before the tribunal? The little Latin which I learnt at Gitschin is of no use here. But you are a studied man, well informed in the law, and must best know what will conduce to my advantage."

" It will all be of no use," muttered the procurator; " but relate the tale to me circumstantially, that I may thoroughly comprehend it."

Again poor Tausdorf undertook the sad labour of narrating the tale of blood. The procurator listened to him, gaping, and then briefly repeated what he had heard to the tribunal, concluding with, " You have now heard

Tausdorf's statement of the affair, gentlemen, and I submit it to your decision."

"Is that your whole defence?" cried the knight indignantly, while this statement was being protocolled. "May our Saviour one day speak for your sins before the judgment-seat of God, as you have spoken for me in this hour before the tribunal of man!"

"Have you any thing else to advance?" said the judge to the accused and his defender; and as they were silent, he rang the bell, saying, "The audit is closed.—Let the knight be conveyed back again to the Hildebrand," he added to the serjeant, who then entered.

"Gentlemen," said Tausdorf, with manly firmness, "I do not believe that you have a right to pronounce judgment on me; but if you do hold yourselves so empowered, I warn you honestly, when you give your votes, to keep your conscience and your dying hour before your eyes. It is an easy thing for you to slay me, for I am in your power; but innocent blood cries with a thousand voices to Heaven, and God is just."

He went away with his guard, followed by his model of a defender, and the judges laid their heads together in anxious whisperings.

In the meantime the day had fully broken, and a bright July sun shone upon the over-watched faces of the council, who were still collected in the Sessions'-chamber, and had reclined themselves against the windows to prevent their going to sleep. The iron old Erasmus alone sat at the green table with bright wakeful eyes, and played with the golden medal appended to his chain of honour. By his side stood the vice-consul, Christopher Drescher, behind a chair, which he rocked to and fro impatiently.

"The judges must have come to a decision by this time," said Erasmus, as if to himself.

"If they only come to a right one," replied Drescher emphatically.

"No fear of that; although parties may at

times run high amongst ourselves, yet against the outward enemy we all stand as one man; and if——Then we are at the goal, brother."

"I only wish you had not forced poor Reimann to defend him. If he should happen to bring forward things which we can't answer?"

"Some defender Tausdorf could not but have; the forms of the law demanded so much, and to forms we must strictly adhere on this occasion. Between ourselves, too, could you in all Schweidnitz have hunted out a worse advocate than this Reimann?"

"You have seen farther than I have," cried the vice-consul, after a pause: "*Concedo.*"

A servant now brought in a letter to the burgomaster, which he opened and read—

"An *Intercessionale* in favour of the prisoner by the Herr von Schindel, resident of this place, and now laid up with the gout," said Erasmus to the council. "The petitioner presumes to defend the accused, uncalled for, and to impugn the competency of our tribunal. *Ad acta!*"

"The Frau von Netz, too, waits below in great trouble," added the servitor, "and im-

plores, in Heaven's name, a secret audience of your excellency."

"The proud nobles can now stoop themselves to entreaties," exclaimed the burgomaster triumphantly; "but it's all of no use."

He went out. The poor Althea stood there, her face in a veil wet with tears, and she approached him with clasped and uplifted hands.

"Will it please you to walk in?" asked Erasmus with cold politeness, and opened the door of the little audience-chamber.

She tottered after him. He placed a chair, motioned to her to sit down, and placed himself opposite.

"What is your pleasure, noble lady?" he asked, after a short time, during which she was unable to speak from sobbing. "Our time is peculiarly valuable to-day."

"Mercy!" at length cried the poor petitioner in the most moving tones of anguish; "Mercy for my intended husband!"

"That is with God!" replied Erasmus. "In my weighty office I recognize but the duty of justice. If such a crime were to remain un-

punished, I should have to account hereafter to the Highest for the innocent victims, which might in future be sacrificed to the arrogance of the nobles."

"I do not pray for the absolution of the unfortunate one; I only pray that the business may be brought before the bishop or the emperor, and I offer to be his security till then with my whole property."

"The murder has been committed within our jurisdiction, and must be punished by our tribunal."

"And do you call it a murder that Tausdorf, to defend his own life, slew your son against his will?"

"It is not for us two to decide upon this point, Frau von Netz; for I am the father of the murdered, and you are the intended of the murderer. The judges will settle it upon their oaths."

"Mr. Burgomaster, we are alone; I would not—by Heavens I would not, offend you; but the terrors of death give me courage for the question; can money save Tausdorf? My

uncle, von Schindel, is rich; we have friends amongst the nobles of the country. Fix the sum."

"If you were not a woman," exclaimed the burgomaster furiously; "if you were not a woman, you should fare ill with this twofold insult, —to the dignity of my office, and to my heart as a father. Gold for blood! That is one of the maxims of you nobles, when the question is of a citizen's life. But the Polish times are over, when the high-born murderer had only to fling the price of blood upon the corse of the murdered, and thus remain free from all retribution. When the nobleman of Siegwitz shot the citizen's daughter, his drinking companions thought that such a girl might well be paid for; but the council there did not think so, and the head of the assassin fell."

"Oh my heart!" sighed Althea, and stood for a time struck with grief and horror at these words of wrath; then on a sudden, collecting her spirits, she flung herself before the burgomaster and embraced his knees.

"Mercy!" she cried, and lifted up her beau-

tiful blue eyes to the inexorable one with so much fervour, that in spite of his iron resolution an unpleasant feeling oppressed his heart, and he was leaning down to her with pity, when the marshal entered to announce that the judges had presented themselves to the council and waited for the worshipful burgomaster. At this the old evil spirit returned in him. He started up with vehemence, and sought to disengage Althea's hands from his knees.

"For Heaven's sake, what will you do?" cried the unhappy victim.

"My duty!" replied the man of the stony heart, and walked away with firm and echoing steps.

The sufferer breathed a deep and piercing sigh, as if in that moment the tender thread of her life was broken, and her head fell in a kind swoon upon the seat of the chair before which she had been kneeling.

The criminal court had laid its sentence before the council. Its adoption and immediate

execution were unanimously resolved upon, the judges were again collected in their sessions' chamber, and the pale, fettered Tausdorf stood before them with his guard, while the chief of the court read thus:—

"As the noble and honourable Kaspar Sparrenberger, surnamed Tausdorf, hath stabbed, and thus brought from life to death the in like manner noble and honourable Francis Friend,—and as this deed is open and manifest,—and he himself cannot, and does not, deny it,—therefore the imperial town-court of Schweidnitz adjudges that Tausdorf, notwithstanding his defence, has forfeited his life for such murder, and consequently, according to the law and custom of the land, shall be executed with the sword."

With this the provost took up a white-peeled willow wand which lay before him on the table, broke it in two, and throwing the pieces at the feet of the condemned, cried,

"The sentence is spoken,
The staff is broken."

"You must die, and the Lord have mercy on your soul!" exclaimed the provosts, and overturned their seats with a heavy clatter.

"I appeal from this unjust sentence to the prince palatine of Silesia and the emperor," cried Tausdorf in a loud voice unshaken by this horrid ceremony.

"Such appeal cannot be made according to our privileges and customs," replied the chief provost. "The execution follows here upon the heels of the sentence."

"Then I appeal to the tribunal of God," said Tausdorf, without losing his presence of mind —"to the tribunal of God, before which we must one day all meet again. When am I to die?"

"In two hours."

"You are very quick, you gentlemen of Schweidnitz. But I suppose I may see my bride again?"

"The council has forbidden it, as well on account of the loss of time connected with it as of the unavoidable lamentation and disturbance."

"Ay, indeed! You gentlemen have true hangmen's hearts, with room therein for barbarity as well as injustice. Yet I hope the time will be just sufficient to prepare me fittingly for my departure. I wish to confess first, and receive the holy sacrament. Have the goodness to send me a priest of my persuasion, and afterwards a notary to draw up my last will."

"Both shall be done," replied the provost, and made a sign to the city-marshal, who went out.

"Moreover I was put into a bad plight in my arrest at Salzbrunn by your runners, and their rabble," continued Tausdorf, surveying his person indignantly; "and it is not fitting that a knight should die publicly in so unworthy a state, as a mockery to your people; therefore send to the Frau von Netz, that she may forward to me my red velvet suit of ceremony for my last travel."

"It shall be done according to your desire," said the chief provost, confounded by the proud calmness of the condemned.

"The chaplain is ready for you below, Herr von Tausdorf, in my little room below the custom-house," announced the city-marshal.

"Then I must first reconcile myself with my enemies according to the duty of a Christian. I pray you, therefore, gentlemen, to forgive me for having through my unlucky deed given you occasion for the sin of injustice. On my part I willingly and freely pardon you my death. God favour you with an early repentance! May my blood be the last which shall flow in this unhappy feud betwixt the nobility and citizens."

He departed with the city-marshal; the gens-d'armes followed. The provosts looked at each other sadly troubled, and from the provost-chief escaped the exclamation, "The business will not be over with the head that is to fall here. Heaven turn all to the best!"

The burgomaster had for a short time betaken himself to his house to give orders for

the burial of his son. He had just dismissed the church-servants, and looked from the bow-window of his audience-chamber with silent anguish on the black-mantled undertakers who were carrying out Francis's coffin to the custom-house, where the body still lay, when doctor Heidenreich came in unsummoned. Erasmus received him with angry exclamations.

"So, you will not cease to torment me? I thought that the contested point had been sufficiently discussed between us last night; as to any change, that is past all question now, since the sentence has been pronounced."

"I know it," said Heidenreich, troubled. "You have condemned Tausdorf to the sword!"

"Not I," interrupted Erasmus vehemently; "but the provost's court at Schweidnitz. The council has, indeed, approved the sentence; but in regard to that personal interest which I take in the affair, I did not even deem it proper to subscribe my name."

"I neither ask of you generosity nor favour. But I demand justice of you for your own sake; you are on the point of committing a crying act

of injustice, and of thereby rending the honourable garland that a long active life has wound about your brows. Your sentence is not only against all equity, but against the laws."

"Against the laws? Mr. Doctor, put a guard upon your tongue, that it may not bring your body into trouble."

"I have heard the murderous story from Tausdorf's servant. Your son was killed by the accused in his just defence. Does not the penal code of Charles the Fifth expressly state, that if any one falls upon, assaults, or strikes another with deadly weapons, and the person so attacked cannot escape without risk and jeopardy to his body, life, honour, or good report, he may then peril life and limb in his just defence without incurring any punishment—and if, moreover, he kills the aggressor, he is not to be, therefore, deemed guilty, nor is he bound to delay with his defence till he is struck, although otherwise against written laws and usages?"

"You have long been known to me as a shrewd advocate," answered Erasmus with

mockery; "but the *Carolina** has not yet been formally published to us, and above all things the act of self-defence should have been proved. The mouth of my poor son is shut, the declaration of the accused and of his servant proves nothing."

"There was also a page of Tausdorf's present; and a woman saw the battle from the garden-wall. In the testimony of three witnesses consists truth."

"The witnesses of whom you speak," replied the burgomaster, confused, "did not present themselves for examination. It was, besides, for the judges to decide whether their examination was requisite."

"But I think, Mr. Burgomaster, it was for your own honour to seek out these witnesses, and to defer the execution of the sentence till then, that it might not be said you wished to destroy the accused from a wretched spirit of revenge."

"I am weary of your insolence; instantly

* The *Carolina* is a criminal law published by Charles the Fifth, called Lex Carolina, or simply as here *Carolina*.

take yourself out of my four walls, Mr. Doctor, or I shall give you lodgings in the Hildebrand as a malcontent and fomenter of discord; they are just now vacant."

"You thrust your better angel from your side," replied Heidenreich sadly. "I have not spoken out of favour to the accused, whom I do not know, but from old friendship to yourself. You will not listen to me, and I wash my hands in innocence. But I tell you a day will come when you will think of my words and of this hour with repentance, alas, too late!"

He left the room. Erasmus went to the window to cool the angry glow upon his face in the fresh air, when he saw the gouty Schindel, who was being carried in a chair by servants towards the burgomaster's house.

"Nothing was wanting but the old gossip with his tedious conciliatory efforts," exclaimed Erasmus, and running out he gave the servant strict orders to show the door to Schindel.

The servant went, and when the burgomaster returned to his room, the preacher Samuel, of St. Mary's church, a gloomy zealot, forced him-

self upon him to condole with the powerful regent on the death of his son. With infinite unction he groaned out, " If, worthy sir, it is sad, mournful, pitiable, and most grievous to lose a dear, beloved child by a natural death, how much more sad, mournful, pitiable, and grievous must it be for a father when a healthful son is snatched from him through God's severe, though wise and gracious dispensation, by so sudden, violent, and horrid a death, without first having time to confess and repent his errors, so that in the full flower of his sins he is hurried away before the eternal judgment-seat !"

" For God's sake, comfort better, Mr. Preacher," cried Erasmus angrily: " You pour aqua-fortis instead of balsam into the wounds of a father's heart."

" The heart of man is an obstinate thing," replied the preacher; " it must be utterly torn and crushed that it may become truly sensible of the consolation of the Gospel; and if you will only allow me a short time, I will undertake so to work upon you, that you shall with pleasure kiss the hand which has struck you thus hardly,

and, like a true Christian, shall attune a rejoicing Hosannah on the grave of your murdered son."

During this harangue the brow of Erasmus grew mightily wrinkled, and he was about to answer the wretched comforter in no very friendly way, when the door opened, and Althea entered, leading her boy.

"This is not to be borne!" he exclaimed to her. "We have nothing more to say to each other, Frau von Netz, and I consider it highly indecent that you should force yourself upon me in this way, unannounced, only to burthen me with entreaties, which my oath forbids my hearkening to."

"Misfortune has its peculiar privileges," replied Althea in a faint and tuneless voice; "I was prepared for all harshness when I resolved to come here, and you can treat me as seems good and proper to yourself; but you must hear me once again; I will not stir from this spot first."

"Speak, then, that I may at last get quit of this torment."

"My intended husband is condemned to die-

I will no longer contend with you whether he has deserved death, or whether you have a right to inflict it; but the power of pardon belongs incontestably to the emperor. I, therefore, only implore you to defer the execution of the sentence till the return of a messenger whom I will despatch to Vienna with my supplication. That cannot militate against your office. On the contrary, it would become you not to anticipate the clemency of your master in a business wherein you must yourself confess you are a party. In the meantime let the condemned remain in your power, and if the emperor pronounces the dreadful NO, we must submit to what cannot be avoided."

"Let the Herr von Tausdorf live, dear burgomaster," said the little Henry, at other times so defying, but now in tears, and kissed the hand of Erasmus with humility. "I am a fatherless orphan, and he would be so good a father to me!"

But the burgomaster withdrew his hand from the child, and eyed now him, now Althea, with piercing glances.

"Take our share in Bogendorf for the brief respite," cried Althea, observing the inveteracy in the eyes of Erasmus. "I will readily make it over to you this very day, and support myself and my son by the labour of my hands, if by that I can only purchase the slightest hope for the safety of the man whom my soul loves."

"You are a fair and a wise lady, Frau von Netz," said the burgomaster at last; "but the old Erasmus is yet too wise for you. You will not find in him the fool you seek."

"Let mercy prevail!" cried Althea in despair, and embraced his knees with wild energy. "Let mercy prevail, as you would that God should one day be merciful to you!"

"Back!" exclaimed the burgomaster indignantly, and pushed her from him. "My son is dead. Neither your wealth nor your tears can make him alive again. Blood demands blood, and Tausdorf must die!"

"Not another word of supplication," cried the little Henry to his mother, who was exhausted by her agony; "tis a pity you offered any to the wicked man. Has not uncle Netz

told you a hundred times that the rich burgomaster is as cold and as hard as the dollars of which he is always boasting so much? Come, mother; we cannot beg the good man free, and therefore we will weep for him as long as we have eyes. But this house is not worthy of your tears;"—and then turning to Erasmus, he said, with a dignity and spirit beyond his years, "You have heavily vexed and offended the Frau von Netz, Mr. Burgomaster, and it is the duty of a good son to avenge every insult which his mother has had to endure. At present my arm is not strong enough for my inclination; but, please God, I shall grow every day larger and stouter, and I think to be able to wield the sword shortly. For this time I denounce feud against you, and whatever may come of it, murder or fire, I shall have set my honour above your impeachment."

He pulled away his mother with him, and Erasmus said to the preacher, "Do you hear how the young snake can hiss already? But follow the lady, if you will be so good, comfort her by virtue of your holy office, and exhort

her to betake herself to her own house, that she may not excite the people by her lamentations in the streets, and force me to send her home by a couple of gens-d'armes."

"Well advised!" replied the preacher, and hastened after Althea, whom he found at the street-door, her head leaning against one of the stone columns of the portal, while Henry stroked her hand consolingly, and wet it with his tears.

"Submit yourself to the will of Heaven," he began; "and this must be the easier to you when you weigh the justice of the sentence pronounced upon the culprit, who was once dear to you. Such assassins and bloodhounds must be forfeit to the executioner as a warning to others, and for their own well-earned punishment. Had not the council done justice in this way, I had never endured to abide in the town; and, if I could not have walked out, I should have crept out, with wife and children, from this pit of murder, in which no honest man could have been secure of his life any longer."

Althea lifted up to him her heavy eyes, that

were red and swollen with weeping, and merely saying, "May God comfort you as you have comforted me!" she sunk back into her old position. Still, however, the preacher continued in the same strain for a time; but when he perceived that the sufferer no longer even listened to his splendid grounds of consolation, he suddenly broke off, and removed himself, with a look in which was couched an anathema.

In the mean time Christopher Friend came out of the street-door and gazed tenderly on Althea.

"Poor lady!" he at last said with a voice of as much pity as he could force into it—"No doubt you would go up to my father to implore him for the life of your betrothed; or you have already been with him, and received an unfavourable answer. Yes! I could have told you that before. You would more easily move the lions of granite that rest upon these columns than my father in this neck-breaking business. Would that I were the reigning burgomaster in his place, to be able to serve you, for I am not very angry with your

Tausdorf. My late brother was an evil man, who probably brought this affair upon himself; and it is a pity that so brave a knight should, on his account, fall under the hands of the executioner. I have, indeed, some influence with my father, especially since I am his only son; and, if I were to run the risk of his anger and put in a good word, I might at least, perhaps, gain you a short delay, and time gained, all is gained."

"Comfort often comes from where it is least expected," stammered Althea, looking at him with anxious doubt. "You, Mr. Christopher, —you have a heart for my sorrows?"

"What man of my years would not have a heart for so fair a lady?" replied Christopher, smiling; "but it is only death that can be had for nothing; life is expensive. Time presses, and therefore I will open my mind to you briefly. Herr Tausdorf is lost to you for ever; if his life even should be saved,—which I hold for a half impossibility,—still he would not get off without a long imprisonment and perpetual exile from this country. Therefore give me

your fair hand, for which I have already sued without success, and I will try what influence I have over my father's heart."

Althea started back in horror, and laid her right hand thoughtfully upon her forehead, her left upon her poor heart, in which anguish was working convulsively. But the inward struggle was soon over, and with the calmness of resignation she turned towards her ungenerous wooer.

"It would, indeed, be hard for me," she said, "to follow a man who makes a trade of his humanity, and to give this boy a father whom he could not respect; still I would make even this sacrifice for him I love, if I could believe that he would accept it. But I am convinced that he would sooner die a thousand times than let me slowly pine away under the tortures of a wretched marriage. Therefore let him and me perish, in God's name; I can never be yours."

She took her child by the hand, and departed slowly with him up the street, towards the market-place.

"Again nothing!" grumbled Christopher to

himself; "the Netherlandress, too, won't have me now. Had I known that it would have been the same here, I hardly think that I should have helped to play this trick. But a woman would, at any time, talk over God himself, and make him sin against his own commandments. How have I burthened my conscience, and at least one-half to no purpose!—The Devil take all women! If it were not for the housekeeping, and the tricks of servants, I would not ask after them, but remain a widower all my life long. In the unmarried state one can lay out so much upon one's self, and save into the bargain; and when at last I have buried my father—who can't hold out much longer with his constant passions—I shall be a substantial man, and laugh at every one.—Good Heavens!"

With this cry he broke off his noble soliloquy; for before him, on a sudden, stood the town-executioner, in his red cloak of office, and, from his thin yellow face, the dark eyes gleamed on Christopher with a savage joy appropriate to this day of horror. All this was in itself quite natural, but Christopher's con-

science smote him hardly at the sight, and he felt as if the hideous being had taken the trouble to come there only on his account.

"Is the worshipful burgomaster above?" asked the executioner, with infinite courteousness and his hat off to the son of his superior. From sheer fright, Christopher was unable to reply; he simply pointed to the steps, stammered out, "Above!" and, creeping out of the street-door by him with as much speed as if he felt the sword at his neck, he hurried off.

In the city-marshal's room, below the custom-house, the noble Tausdorf was still kneeling before the chaplain, who administered the sacrament to him, and blessed him for death. The priest then retired, but his clerk, instead of following, barred the door behind him again, advanced to Tausdorf, who just then was rising from the ground, and asked, in a familiar voice, "Do you know me?"

"Rasselwitz!" cried Tausdorf, surprised.

"You have crept in, thus disguised, to bid me farewell for this world. That is bravely done of you, and I thank you heartily for your love."

"I have something more important in my thoughts," replied Rasselwitz quickly and softly. "I would save you. Wrap my black cloak about you, take the cap in your hand, follow the chaplain as his clerk through the gens-d'armes; he is still talking without to the city-marshal. The holy man is in the secret, and goes from here to the farthest end of the Striegauer suburb to a sick person, and thence you may easily escape."

"And *you?*" asked Tausdorf, in deep emotion.

"I!" replied Rasselwitz; "why I remain here in the mean time, and laugh at the serjeants, when they come and find the nest empty."

"That laugh would cost you dear," said Tausdorf; "Heaven be praised that I have more forethought than yourself. The council and the provosts thirst after my blood like hun-

gry tigers. They would be mad on finding me snatched from them, and your head would fall instead of mine."

"Not so," insisted Rasselwitz. "They would fling me into the Hildebrand, which I already know full well, and there I will abide patiently till the bishop frees me."

"It might this time easily turn out otherwise, and I dare not set the life of my preserver on such possibilities, not to speak of the abuse of the holy sacrament which you would persuade me to. I thank you for your noble offer, but I remain."

"Pray take it, Herr von Tausdorf," cried Rasselwitz, urgently. "I should delight in hazarding something for you, more especially as it seems to me as if I were half the cause of your misfortune, although with no evil intention. I have unconsciously drawn you into the snare which, in the end, has closed destructively about you, and therefore I owe you an atonement. Pray you now accept it."

"I do not understand your words, my young friend, but only the good heart that speaks in

them. You may, however, spare them in my case; for by my knightly word I stir not from this room till my hour strikes. If you have done me any wrong, knowingly or unknowingly, I forgive you with all my heart, even without atonement; for, *that* our Saviour has offered for us all by his death upon the cross."

"I cannot let you die," cried Rasselwitz, wildly; "if you will not save yourself as I propose, I will call together as many brave nobles, and their people, as may be collected in the town. Unfortunately Netz is wanting, with his adherents; and, as the gates are closed, I can send no message to him; but still I will undertake to muster fifty heads. We set fire to the nest in twenty places, and in the confusion we break through to you, and snatch you, by force, from the teeth of the dragon."

"Heaven defend me from such a saving! It would cost much noble and innocent blood, which, in truth, would be too high a price for this head. Were I to accept it, I should deserve the fate which awaits me. Leave me at least the conviction that I die innocently: it is

my best consolation in this hour,—and now depart, my friend, for my moments are numbered."

"You are a saint," cried Rasselwitz, in tears, and kissing Tausdorf's hand before he could prevent it. "You do well to leave this world, for it is much too bad for you. I obey your will, but I must find out the spider which lurked in the centre of this hellish web that has wound about you to your ruin, and, when I have found it, I will crush it under my feet, though your spirit should call down from Heaven, 'have mercy!'"

He rushed out, and Tausdorf again fell upon his knees, while his looks flew through the iron bars with burning enthusiasm to the seat of everlasting freedom. "You have highly favoured me in life, eternal Father!" he exclaimed. "Unspotted honour, pure love, and true friendship, have adorned, with their noblest garlands, this head, which I must now lay down in the long sleep of the grave. Now, then, crown thy work of mercy through a good death. Grant that I may depart with courage, and

without bitterness against my enemies, so that I may appear before thy throne, not unworthy of thy immortal son."

The gens-d'armes had drawn a triple circle of spears about the stone columns before the sessions-house cellars. Within, by a heap of strewed sand, waited the executioner with his sword beneath his red cloak. On the other side of the circle the people thronged in a dense mass. All the windows of the market-place swarmed with spectators, while the roofs and the chimney-tops were covered with men, all expecting, with anxious curiosity and a strange painful pleasure, the victim which they yet lamented.

The bells of the parish church began to toll, and the death-procession approached slowly from the custom-house. By the side of the city-marshal, surrounded by spearmen, walked the noble Tausdorf, free from fetters, and with his accustomed nobleness. The tight red suit of velvet sate handsomely upon his well-formed limbs, and in his raven locks was woven a coronet of flowers. The features of the pale face were

calm and cheerful, and in the glance of his large black eye beamed a light that no longer seemed to be of this world. With friendly greetings to the by-standers, he entered the circle.

"I die innocent," he exclaimed in a loud clear voice, that sounded far beyond the market-place. "But what earthly son shall dare to boast himself free from all earthly failings? I therefore humbly pray to Heaven for pardon for any acknowledged and unacknowledged sins, and hope also, from your Christian charity, that you will forgive me such, and put up your prayers in my behalf, that I may have a blessed end!"

A general sobbing answered this address, and amidst it, from the distance, sounded the lamenting voice of the poor Althea.—

"If I could but see you once again!"

"This is more bitter than death," sighed Tausdorf half to himself, and, turning to the quarter whence her voice had come, he cried, "My dear Althea, that can no more be in this

world, but we shall meet again in life everlasting!"

The sobbing of the people grew louder, and here and there were heard single words of discontent. But the marshal gave a sign to two of the gens-d'armes, who went with their spears to that part whence the voice of Althea had come. Then advancing to Tausdorf, he said earnestly, "It is time!"

Tausdorf immediately undid his doublet with his own hands, and flung it amongst the people; then, loosening his ruff, he did the same with that.—And now he knelt upon the sand-heap, with unbound eyes, looked up to Heaven, and exclaimed joyfully, "To thee, my Saviour, I commend myself—Amen!"

With the *amen*, the sword glittered behind him, and his head fell.

The council was still assembled in their sessions-chamber. Erasmus sate again at the green-covered table, with deep sorrow in his iron features, for now that the spirit of venge-

ance was satisfied, pain had found more room in his hard heart. The city-marshal entered.

"All is done as you ordered, worshipful Mr. Burgomaster. Your son and von Tausdorf have been solemnly interred, with the attendance of the whole college, the preachers, and a considerable train of mourners, and I caused the bodies to be laid in ONE grave, according to your order, and in the family burial-place. I have also had the town gates re-opened."

"You have done well," replied the burgomaster, with a hollow voice, and made him a sign with his hand to depart.

"Moreover," continued the marshal, "all the noble inquilines* of the city wait without, and request admittance to the honourable council.

"Be it granted, then," said the burgomaster with a heavy heart, and the city-marshal left the room.

In a short time he returned, conducting a train of sable figures. First came the gouty

* The reader must forgive me the coining of a very useful word, which will be easily understood by reference to the Latin *inquilinus*.

old Schindel, leaning on Rasselwitz and Netz; Althea, holding her child by the hand, followed next. Many old nobles, male and female, who had settled at Schweidnitz, brought up the procession. All were in deep mourning, the women veiled in long black veils. When they had reached the council-table, Netz fetched a chair from the wall, and respectfully placed it before von Schindel. The latter, with difficulty, seated himself, and then, looking up to Netz and Rasselwitz, said, "You remember your promise, knights? You leave me alone to speak, is it not so?"

"Have no fear, uncle," replied Netz, grinding his teeth. "The affair, besides, cannot be ended with words. We will be silent as the grave, that swallowed up our Tausdorf."

"Gentlemen," began the old man, with a trembling voice, "you have done that which is not right before God. The innocent blood has flowed; to save and repair is no longer possible. I will, therefore, spare you and myself the sorrow of explaining how much you have erred, and on what grounds. I do not come

to find fault or dispute with you; I come only to take leave of you for this life, and, at the same time, to bid you farewell in the name of all those nobles who have hitherto lived in peace under the shelter of your walls. You must yourselves find it natural, that none of them deem their life safe in a town that could let so noble a head fall under the sword of the executioner! Fear, indeed, has no longer any influence with me; I am too old for that, although I openly avow that I myself should not like to die here now, as I would not have my grave amongst you. A higher purpose compels me hence. My poor niece, whom you have made a widow, intends going, with her orphaned child, to Bohemia, to the old father of her betrothed, that she may console him for the loss of his only son, and wait there in patience till death shall free her from her sufferings, and re-unite her with the beloved of her heart. I go with her, and remain with her, for she needs a paternal friend in that foreign land. There will we sit alone together in our sorrow, and weep and

comfort each other; and on my knightly word, we will never curse you. Heaven bless you! Heaven bring you to the consciousness of that which you have done, and awake in you a forgiving heart through holy penitence, that henceforth no more innocent victims may be sacrificed to the discord that is between you and us. If this wish should be fulfilled, if the blood shed in yonder grave should ripen into the fruit of peace, hail! thrice hail to the dust of the martyr!"

The speaker was silent; his companions wept aloud, and those of the council turned away to dry their eyes unmarked. Only the old Erasmus stared before him, tearless, gloomy, and full of thought.

"I am ready," said Schindel, looking up to his two guides, who took him by the arms, and helped him to rise. Supported by them, he bowed to the council, and was led away.

The mourning procession followed him; the door closed behind them, while the council looked in silence at each other, and then gloomily

at the old burgomaster, who, surprised by this measure, was not master of his speech.

"The young Lord Hochberg of Fürstentein," announced the city-servant.

"He, too, must have little that is consolatory to say to us," exclaimed Alderman Trentler; and Erasmus, almost lost in insensibility, signed to the servant to admit him.

The youth entered in complete armour, lifted up his visor before the council-table, and, leaning on his sword, cast fierce and burning glances amongst the troubled faces about the table.

"You have caused Tausdorf to be seized by your people within the Fürstentein jurisdiction," he began with bitterness; "you have murdered him by a mockery under the name of a trial, and thus have invaded the jurisdiction of his imperial majesty as lord paramount, and of my mother as holder of the fief. The rascally peasants at Saltzbrunn who abetted your people in this crime are already in prison, and shall be severely punished in body and goods. We have sent a messenger to the emperor with the relation of the business. What he may deter-

mine upon your conduct, as far as concerns himself, is for you to look to; we, however, are resolved to defend our own rights in particular, and not to lay down our heads in peace till this monstrous crime is punished and atoned for. But since his imperial majesty has strictly forbidden private feud, we shall, in our just anger, better observe the will of our sovereign than you the aggressors have done; and you shall answer us before the court of fiefs: and to that I cite you herewith, for the first,—second,—and third time."

"The emperor's town is not bound to appear before the feudal court," replied Erasmus sullenly. "Rather have we a right to summon the nobles, who, from the time of Bieler's murder up to the present day, have tormented us without stint or measure."

"You will not, then, appear?" said the nobleman warmly.

"Never, my young squire," cried the stout old man, striking his breast—"Never, while I govern in Schweidnitz!"

"Well then," retorted the noble indignantly,

"you have forfeited all right and all honour, and I herewith pronounce you outlawed and infamous; and disclaim you in the name of the nobles of this principality. We will not make war upon you without the emperor's order, but your Schweidnitz shall henceforth be like a town, in which the pest rages. Woe to our serfs if they dare to bring you provisions; woe to your citizens if they dare to go beyond their walls; woe to yourselves if you are caught upon our land and soil. You shall see with terror that we know how to administer justice in our way: as a pledge of it I leave you my gauntlet. Whichever of you has courage enough may bring it after me. I will wait an hour for the messenger on the borders of your territory."

And he hurled the iron gauntlet upon the table with a violence that upset the inkstands and sandboxes, and then rushed out.

Erasmus foamed in silent indignation. On a sudden he thrice pulled the bell-handle which hung over the table, and at the summons three city-servants immediately hastened into the room.

"Take four of the horse-police to your assistance," he exclaimed to them. "Seize me the young lord of Hochberg, and fling him into the Hildebrand until farther orders."

But at this there arose a murmur of contradiction amongst the aldermen, who stood up from their seats and shook their heads; and Martin, the youngest amongst them, found courage to speak out his sentiments.

"Under favour, worshipful Mr. Burgomaster. The young lord was indeed somewhat too rough here, but in the main point he was unfortunately right; and if we would imprison all those who blame our this day's proceedings, we shall soon have to convert our sessions-room into a Hildebrand. I vote against the arrest."

"And I!" cried Miller and Trentler, as if from one mouth.

"Have you a wish for another execution?" said Kaspar Franz to the gloomy despot.

"We are already deep in the mire through Tausdorf," observed Doctor Grenwitz, shrugging his shoulders:—and the vice-consul Dres-

cher whispered to the burgomaster,—"Recall your order!"

Erasmus bit his lips till they bled.

"What are you standing for, idiots?" he exclaimed to the three servants who remained at the door in anxious uncertainty as to which command they were to obey. "Don't you know that the majority of voices decides in our sittings? The arrest of Von Hochberg may remain."

The servants left the room; Erasmus, rising from his chair, said, "The sitting is over, gentlemen; but we will, with your good pleasure, have a meeting extraordinary to-morrow, to weigh maturely what farther is to be done in this matter."

"If in this extraordinary sitting," said Kaspar, as he broke up, to his neighbour, "we do not find the art of replacing heads that have been chopped off, we shall descend from the Sessions-house as wise as we went up."

The other aldermen said nothing, but saluted the burgomaster in silence; and the old man soon stood alone before the council-table in the empty chamber.

"Yes," he muttered; "I must no longer conceal it from myself; it is coming to an end with the old lion. Teeth and claws grow blunted. The brutes, that once shook at his roar, now renounce their obedience, and mock the feeble monarch; even the ass must give his kick. Die, therefore, Erasmus, die soon, that you may not outlive yourself."

"A new misfortune has happened, Mr. Burgomaster," cried the city-marshal, entering hastily. "The gardener in the park, who exhibited the aloe for some time past, has suddenly disappeared; but the Netherlandress, who lodged with him, was found dead in her room an hour ago. I went thither with two officers to seal up every thing, and took the town-physician with me; for the flight of the host, and the lady's death, seem to stand in a doubtful connexion. The people of the house talked of poison. I found the woman lying on the floor, in an upper room, horribly disfigured; and on the table was a cup, the dregs of which the physician positively declared to be poison. In her stark right hand the corse held fast this

writing. It is addressed to you, Mr. Burgomaster, and sealed moreover."

"To me!" said Erasmus, in alarm; tore the writing away from the marshal, and broke it open. A quantity of dry leaves fell out of it towards him—"Strange!" he murmured, and began to read; and, as he read, the hand in which he held the letter trembled more and more, till at last he grew so faint that he sunk back into his chair. But he forced himself to read it to the end, and then burnt the letter in the flame of the expiring candle, waiting with great patience till the paper was entirely converted into ashes. He then turned to the marshal:—"Let the body be watched by six gens d'armes till night; then let it be carried behind the wall to the churchyard, and there silently interred. I will myself take an inventory of all that is left, and you will be silent as to the whole transaction—on your oath of office."

The old man's voice broke at the conclusion of his discourse, and with tottering steps he left the Sessions-chamber.

Three years had passed since Tausdorf's death. Christopher Friend had remained a widower, and by all means, just as well as unjust, had considerably increased his mammon. He was asleep in his own bedroom, on a beautiful summer's night, when he was awakened by a grasp at his throat, and, on opening his eyes in terror, there sat upon the bed two men, fearfully illuminated by the moon. They were enveloped in dark cloaks, with black masks on their faces, and held two daggers glittering at his breast, in the pale yellow light. The one figure had his hand about Christopher's throat, and seemed ready to close it at the slightest motion of his victim.

"Gracious Heavens! what does this mean?" groaned Christopher; but at the instant he felt a tighter pressure of the hand about his throat, and the daggers pricked him in the region of the heart.

"Still!" whispered one of the masks. "A loud word, a cry for help, sends you in the same moment to hell. We are here to sit in judgment on you, though, indeed, in a fairer

way than your father used three years since. It has cost no little time, and trouble, and gold—nay, even two journies to Bohemia—to penetrate your tricks and blinds; but at last all has become clearer to us than the day. We had paid you a visit long before this, but that the noble Althea prayed so irresistibly for you, that during her life we could not undertake any thing against you. Now at last she has sunk under the grief for her betrothed: Tausdorf's old father has to weep for his daughter, and the last chain is snapped in which our revenge lay bound. Your father has to answer to the emperor for his notorious crimes; but you have done and concealed your deed with equal cunning, and no earthly court of justice will ever be able to convict you of it. You must, therefore, answer to our *secret tribunal,* of which we are ourselves the chief and the judges, the accuser and the executioner. You have had intercourse with the Netherlandress at the nurseryman's in the park; and this very woman wanted to hound me on to your brother's murder."

"By Heavens! I know nothing of it," whined Christopher.

"Still!" continued the mask. "Failing in that, she has a long conversation with you in private. Upon this you invite Tausdorf to your murderous banquet, and, while you promise Althea that your brother shall not be present, you secretly induce him, through a third hand, to appear: then comes the Netherlandress, masked, to your party. After a conversation with her, the most violent wrath is perceived on the face of Francis. You pour him out another glass of wine, like oil in the flame, upon which he allures into the park Tausdorf, whom he had never seen before, and that event takes place which thousands of honest people lament. Now then answer for yourself, but with a low voice, or we strike you down on the spot."

"How can I answer for all the unlucky events, the chain of which has cost me a beloved brother?" whispered Christopher, in a voice which, from fear of the daggers, was scarcely audible. "What motives could I have to destroy Tausdorf, who had never offended me?

Why, too, should I particularly fix on my brother as the instrument of my evil purpose? By the ——"

"Still!" said the mask again. "I hate you as the serpent that stung my friend to death, but I would not send you to the devil with perjury upon your tongue; you have without that enough of old sin posted in the great reckoning-book above.—You ask, why you should wish to destroy Tausdorf? Because Althea refused your hand for his sake.—Why you chose your brother for the instrument? Because, with true brotherly affection, you hoped the instrument might be broken on the occasion, that so you might stand as the ONLY son of the rich Erasmus. Recollect your former calumnies against Tausdorf; recollect what you said to Althea at your father's door on the morning after the misfortune, and deny no longer. You will not lie yourself out of our hands again, and a frank repentant confession of your sins may propitiate the wrath of the judge before whom you will stand ere the morning breaks."

"Mercy!" murmured Christopher in low,

piteous tones. "Only spare my life, and I will confess all. The woman seduced me into bringing Tausdorf together with my brother that they might quarrel, but it was not so evilly intended as it turned out."

"The woman seduced you?" exclaimed the mask. "It was so our grandfather, Adam, excused himself, and the seducer laid it all upon the serpent; but the angel with the fiery sword drove them all out of Paradise, to which they no more belonged, as you no more belong to life. Therefore pray a short farewell prayer, for we are Christians."

"Mercy!" groaned Christopher piteously. "I cannot pray. Take half my wealth as an atonement, but do not kill me."

"Ay!" retorted the mask, with cold sternness. "You and your whole race, with all your gold, would not outweigh the single head of the noble Tausdorf, whom your iniquity has slaughtered. There can be no talk between us of mercy or atonement, but of well-earned retribution: therefore, away with you, scoundrel! away to death!"

And he flung a noose about Christopher's neck, and dragged him from the bed.

"Heaven be thanked!" said the other mask, pulling strongly at the rope. "At last we come from words to deeds."

Like vultures upon a lamb, they pounced upon the unhappy Christopher with murderous hands, and dragged him out of the door in spite of his impotent strugglings;—fainter and fainter sounded his half-stifled cries—at last there was a heavy fall in the distance, and a sound as of the splash of water from a depth: then another short, low groan; and the old silence of night resumed her reign, and the clock of the Sessions-house struck the third hour.

The next morning when the old Erasmus entered the Sessions-chamber, he found the assembled provosts standing with gloomy faces about the butcher, George Heymann, master of

the shambles, who was showing a bloody wound in his neck, and took on most piteously.

"Things cannot go on in this way any longer, Mr. Burgomaster," cried the Alderman Kaspar Franz, in a tone that the old man had not been accustomed to hear in Schweidnitz. "It is inconceivable what our good city suffers from your violence and blunders. It is not enough that we must frequently submit to a scarcity of provisions, because the vassals of the nobles no longer dare to come to market here, but our citizens are no more secure of their lives if they venture beyond the walls. As this poor man was driving sheep to town, Hans Ecke of Viehau, and Hans Hund of Ingersdorf, fell upon him with naked weapons, struck at his neck, and when he stood on his defence, wounded him severely with a dagger. In this manner things go on daily; they already level their guns at our watchmen upon the walls, and we shall soon be forced to put on armour when we go to the sessions-house. For all this evil we have to thank no one but you; and do you, therefore, find a remedy. You

have cooked this bitter broth for us, and do you now help in eating it, that we may at last have clean dishes."

"Lead the wounded man to the nearest surgeon," said Erasmus to the servant in waiting. "He shall be dressed at my expense."

The servant obeyed. The burgomaster crept up to his seat of honour, and sat himself down exhausted, as he turned to the last speaker.—"It is hard of you, colleague, to lay to my charge the consequences of measures which were adopted by the general consent of the council. Besides, the affair is not yet settled, and your reproaches, therefore, in any case, are too early. If the emperor should receive our answer as valid, we shall then assuredly not be denied satisfaction for the waylayings of these knightly robbers. From Ingolstadt, too, the legal opinion has been sent in reply to our inquiries, that we proceeded well with Tausdorf, and I still, therefore, entertain good hopes."

"If these hopes should not happen to be built on sand," exclaimed Alderman Franz;

" the Emperor will hardly decide on us by the opinion of the gentlemen of Ingolstadt. The whole investigation was of so hostile a nature, and so humiliating in the forms for us, that we may thence infer a severe sentence with tolerable certainty. Besides, I have heard a bird whistle on this subject, whose tune by no means pleases me."

The burgomaster stared in alarm at his colleague, when the door opened, and the servant announced, " The delegates returning from Prague."

" Returned already!" exclaimed Erasmus, and the last blood-drops forsook his face, so that he looked quite awful, like the alabaster-bust of some evil old Roman emperor.

And the old Christopher Drescher, the Alderman Melchior Lange, the Syndic Dr. Lange, entered slowly, with downcast eyes, and in silence took their places at the sessions-table. They were followed by the Secretary Jonas, who, with a heavy sigh, laid down his leathern portfolio on a side-table and opened it.

" You bring us nothing good?" asked Eras-

mus, after a long pause; and the Syndic exclaimed, "What is the use of delaying, for you must know it at last? You sowed the seed by handfuls, and therefore the harvest cannot much surprise you. The wrath of Heaven lies heavy on us; the sentence could not be more severe. The city is declared to have forfeited its right of jurisdiction, and of electing its own council, the fief and land-court of the principality is removed to Jauer, and the punishment of the council, and others, for the execution of Tausdorf, the Emperor has reserved to himself peculiarly. In a short time we may expect the Emperor's delegate, who, in his name, will annul our council, and conduct the further proceedings against us."

In silence they listened to these evil tidings, in silence they remained sitting, when the Syndic had ceased to speak, all equally overwhelmed by the heavy fate that was hurrying upon them. Their eyes only, which were fixed on the burgomaster, expressed the reproaches they intended him. In the meantime the secretary had drawn from his portfolio the imperial

decree, and taking it from its double envelope, now laid it with a condoling gesture on the table before Erasmus, who first glanced hastily below at the Emperor's seal and subscription, and then attempted to read. But he could not accomplish it; he still gazed on the first side, and soon his eyes stared vacantly from the paper on the air. The Vice-Consul was on the point of wakening him from this lethargy of the spirit, when the city-marshal rushed into the room with a face of horror. And now Erasmus started up from his stupefaction.—"Another Job's post," he exclaimed; "I read it in your countenance: but speak it out; we have already heard the worst; what is still to come cannot much affect us."

"Would to heaven it were so!" replied the bailiff. "My tidings concern you in particular, Mr. Burgomaster. Your son Christopher has been found dead in his night-clothes, in the well of his garden."

A cry of horror burst from the lips of all present, and the old Erasmus clasped his long thin hands.—"My last!" he exclaimed piteously —then suddenly, in a louder voice, he added,

"Thou art just, O God!" and his head, with its silver locks, fell back, so that it hung over the elbow of his chair.

The council crowded about him in terror. The vice-consul looked at the old man's broken eyes, felt his pulse, and cried with deep emotion, "He is dead!"

"He who does not walk in fear, does not please God!" cried Caspar, in his dark fanaticism, with the words of Sirach.

"De mortuis nil nisi bene, collega," admonished the vice-consul. "The deceased, with all his failings, was yet a MAN, in the full sense of the word, and therefore always estimable. If he has erred, he has severely suffered. Peace be with his ashes!"

He went to the head of the corse, and folded his hands in prayer. The others stood around and did the same; and from every lip trembled a low and devout supplication for the dead.

END OF VOL. I.

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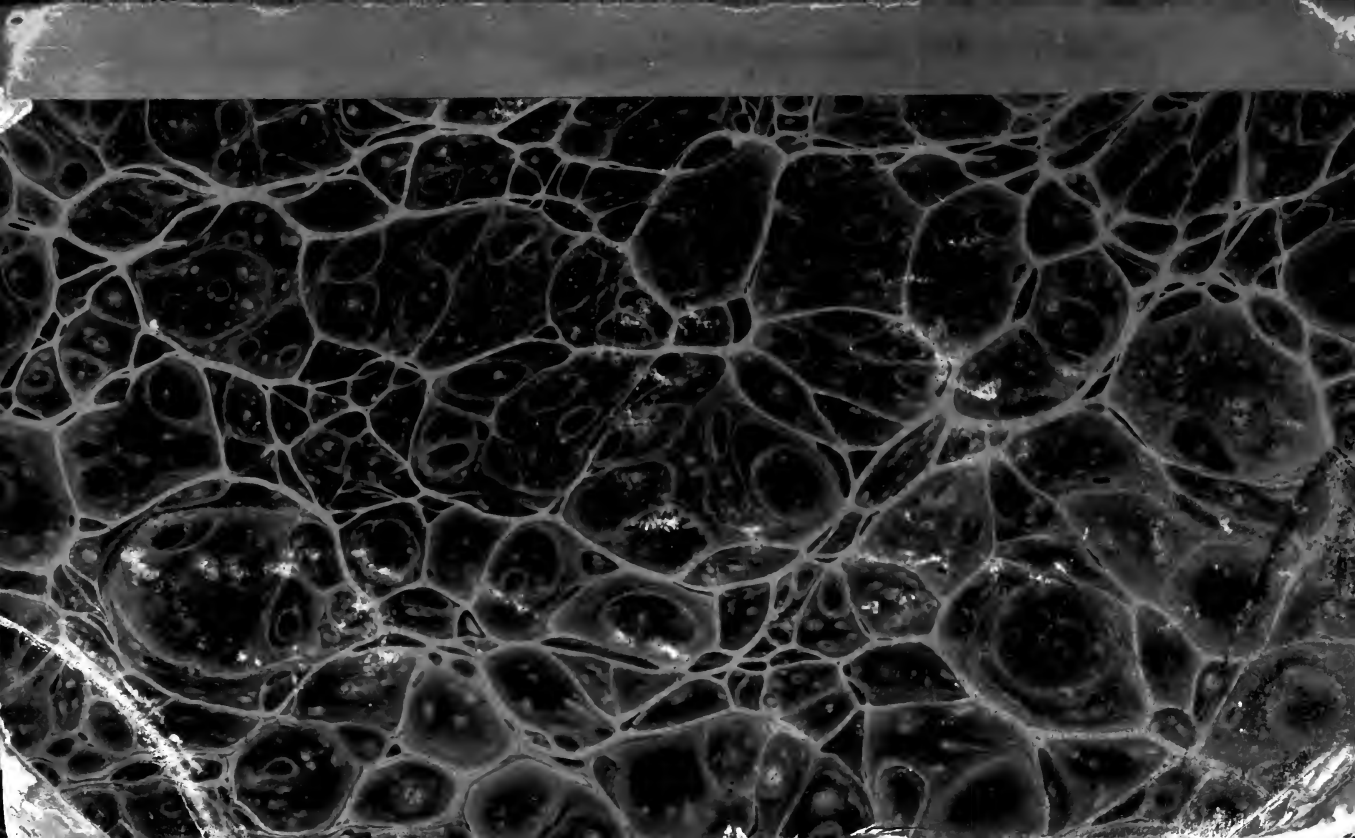
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